FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

STEP-BY-STEP

GET BETTER AT DRAWING

John Howe reveals his sketching secrets

Learn

NEW ART SKILLS

Exciting and unique ways to help transform your character art

Pro advice

LAND YOUR DREAM JOB

Have you got what it takes to become a concept artist?

Inside

MAP MAKING WITH JAMES GURNEY

DRAW AND PAINT A PORTLY CREATURE

GLOW TECHNIQUES IN PHOTOSHOP

From a nebulous vision to finished cover art – Bao Pham explains all

iPAD PAINTING! HOW TO USE REAL LIFE TO IMPROVE YOUR FANTASY ART

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BIG TOP!
POSER 9
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Welcome…
to a fresh new start

A new year always brings hope for fresh challenges and opportunities, none more so than for artists wanting to improve their skills or secure their dream job. With this in mind, we visited video games developers Rocksteady Studios to get the lowdown on what it takes to be a concept artist. It'll give you a great insight into the role of an art team – from art director to concept artist – on a video game. Take a look on page 56. We also asked four artists about their hopes and plans for 2012. They gave surprisingly varied replies – see for yourself on page 20.

If you read the magazine, but still don't paint as much as you'd like to, why not check out this month's ImagineFX forum winners on page 28? Our forums are a great place to visit if you're taking your first steps into digital art, because there are beginners and pros alike on hand to provide advice and critique. The forumites also offer up weekly challenges for you to take part in. Having someone else pick a theme of what to paint is a great way to portray new subjects and compositions – and expand your skill set in the meantime. Take a trip to **www.imaginefx.com/myfx** to see what's on offer.

Remember that every step that you take this year – no matter how small – is a step forward. It's better to try and fail than not try in the first place. A person who doesn't make mistakes doesn't make anything at all. Who would you rather be in 2012?

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.

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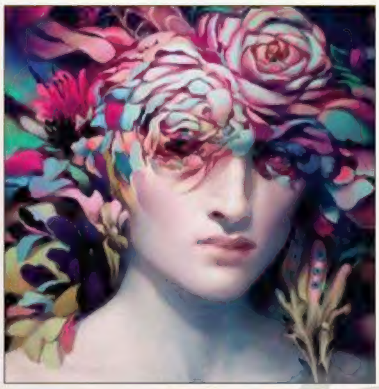
Cover artist

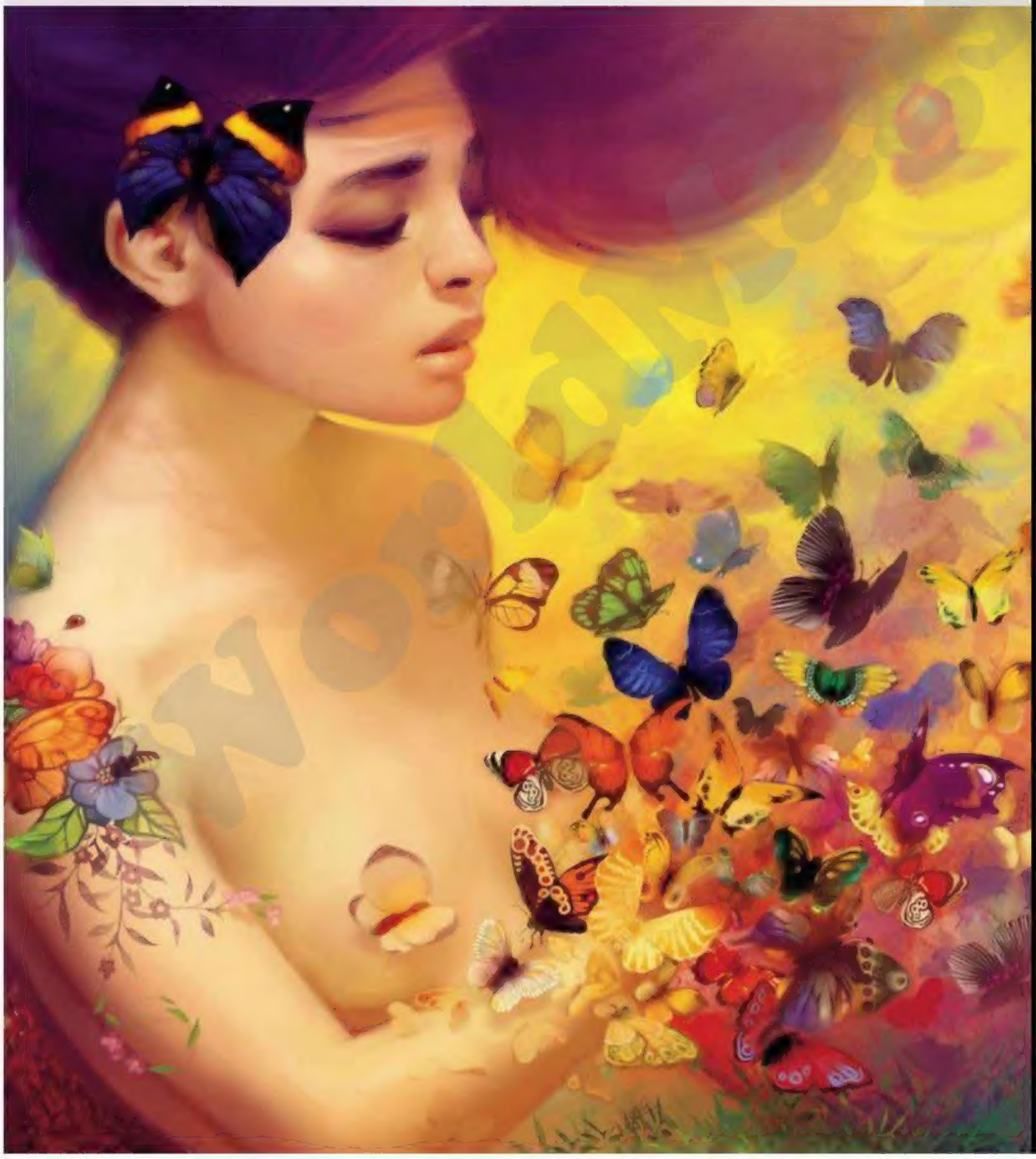
Creative, colourful and unafraid to delve into the deepest recesses of his imagination to create his characters, Bao Pham's the perfect cover artist

Bao Pham

COUNTRY: US
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: www.thienbao.deviantart.com

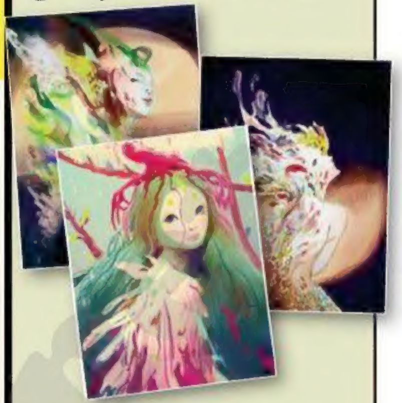
After moving to America from Vietnam 15 years ago, Bao has carved out a successful career painting exotic, colourful and imaginative digital and traditional art. Winning numerous awards and attention from the art press, Bao has painted two covers for ImagineFX since leaving art school in 2007.



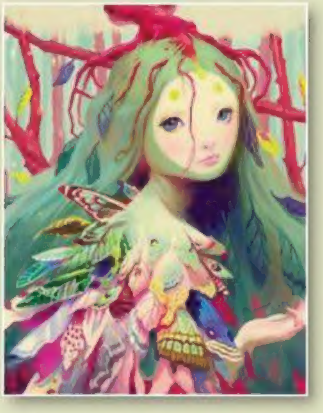


In progress

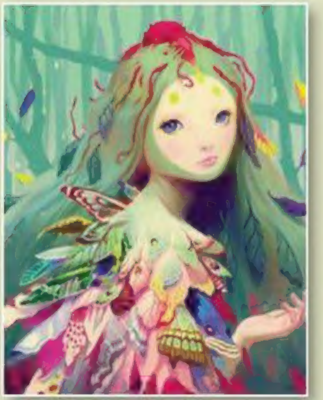
How this issue's cover grew from a small seed



After agreeing to paint the cover, Bao sent over three colour WIPs for Claire and the team to pick from. Immediately the pale wide-eyed, moon-faced girl caught our eye. Part plant, part animal, part explosion of colour... how could we resist?



As the painting takes shape Bao develops his character's personality and costume. She's a tree creature, branches grow from her head and butterfly-like petals sprout from her body like a colourful cape of natural beauty.



For the cover to work, the colours need to be toned down and the tree detail simplified. First a green tone is tried, before Bao returns to the original pink background, but tempers the brightness and contrast to make the character read better from her scenery. The cover is all but complete – see his workshop on page 70.

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ImagineFX

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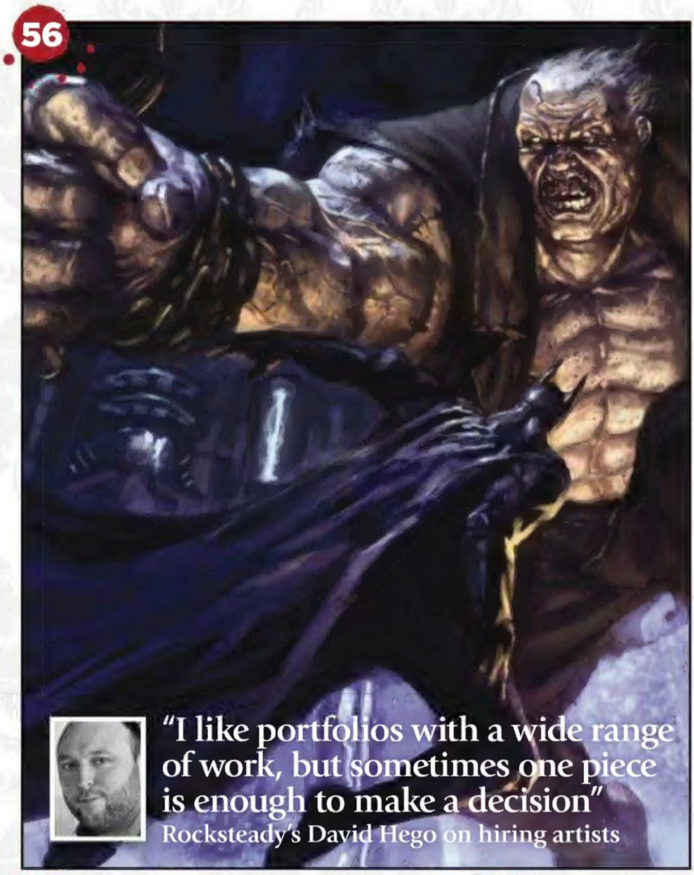

"I like portfolios with a wide range of work, but sometimes one piece is enough to make a decision"
Rocksteady's David Hego on hiring artists

© NCsoft

Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

See page 8 for the best new art

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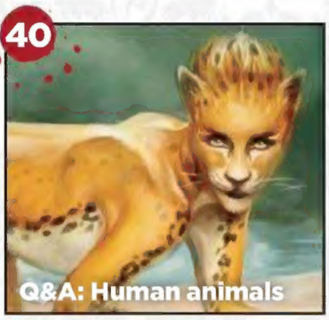

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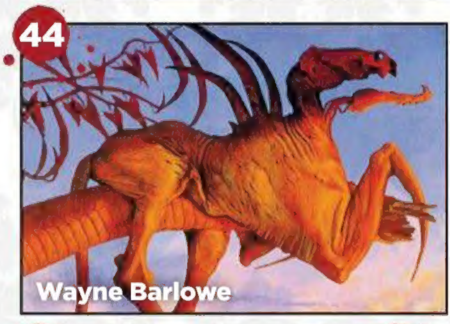

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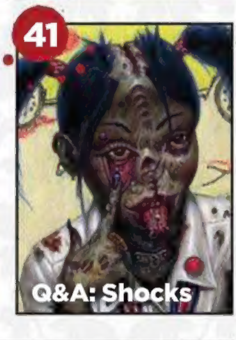

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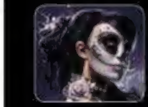

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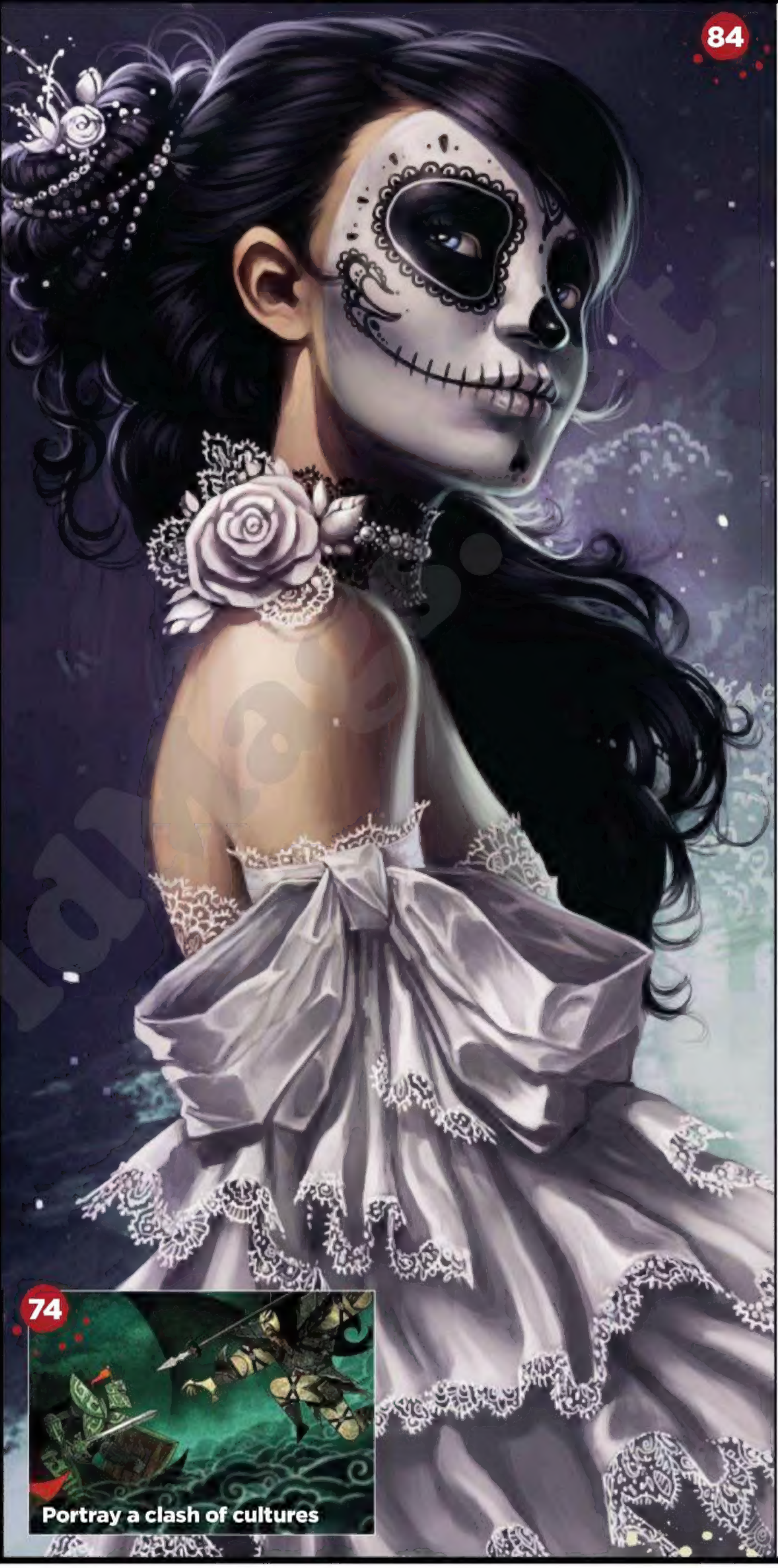
Figures in motion, decaying flowers, friendly robots and much more!



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Portray a clash of cultures

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Nam Sang heun

LOCATION: South Korea
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SOFTWARE: Photoshop

For Nam, art was always a fun but frivolous after-work activity. "I used to draw fan art every minute of my free time," he says, "but to be honest I always thought it a joyful yet useless activity." However, all that "useless" art paid off. "Of course, that's how I finally honed my skills and gained my love of working in this medium."

Working as a character concept artist for the online game company NVIUS, Nam couldn't be happier with his wasted youth. "I love my job, and hope I can do it for my whole life."

1 BATH WITH AIRU "This is a piece of fan art for the game Monster Hunter. I tried to express the warm emotion between all three characters, while keeping a bit of humour in there. It was also great fun to put a lot of motion in the image. Hard, but fun!"

2 A DEMON READS A LIGHT NOVEL "Another piece of fan art from Monster Hunter, this is an Otaku Demon pushing the writer for the next copy of the light novel. Sometimes I wish this would happen when I need inspiration for a deadline!"

3 WITCH'S TRAVEL "I'm really happy with the way that this image came out. I think your eye will be taken around the image, picking up all the details and characters. The cat and rabbit having a cup of tea was a detail that I added towards the end."

CHARACTER MODELING
d'artiste
EXOTIQUE

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulations Nam – you've won yourself a copy of Exotique 6 and Character Modeling 3! To find out more about these two great art resources, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

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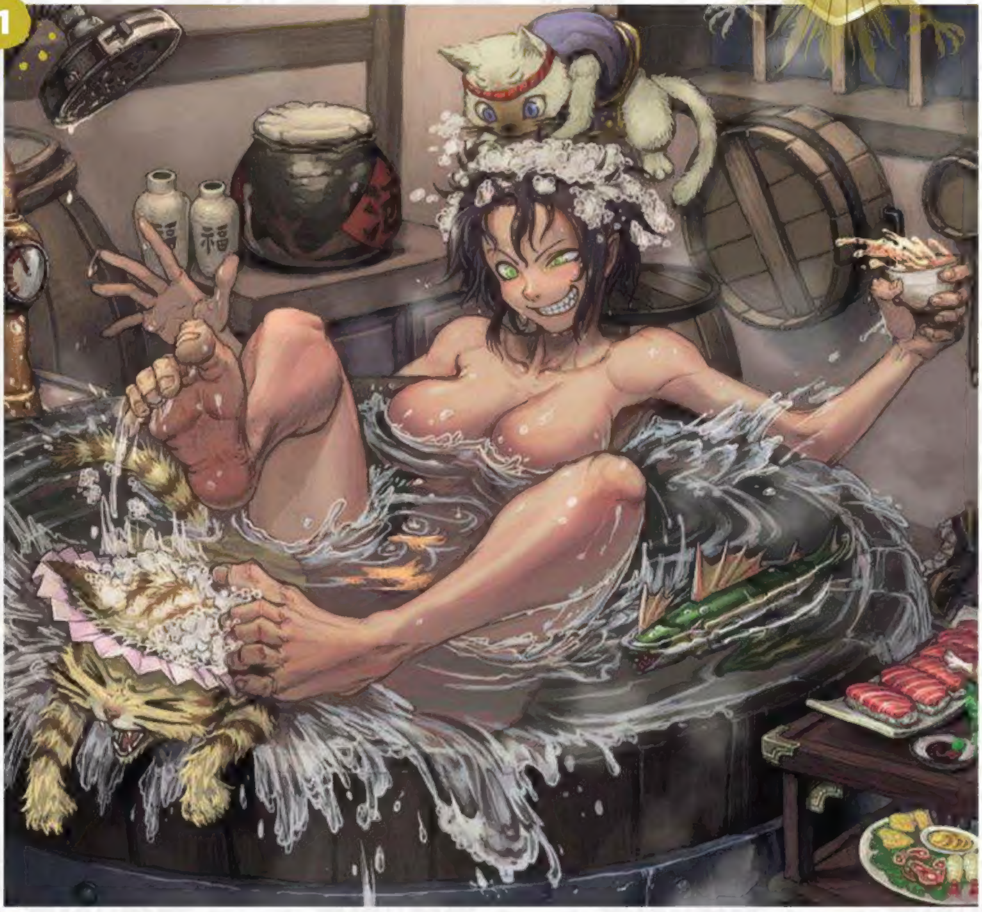

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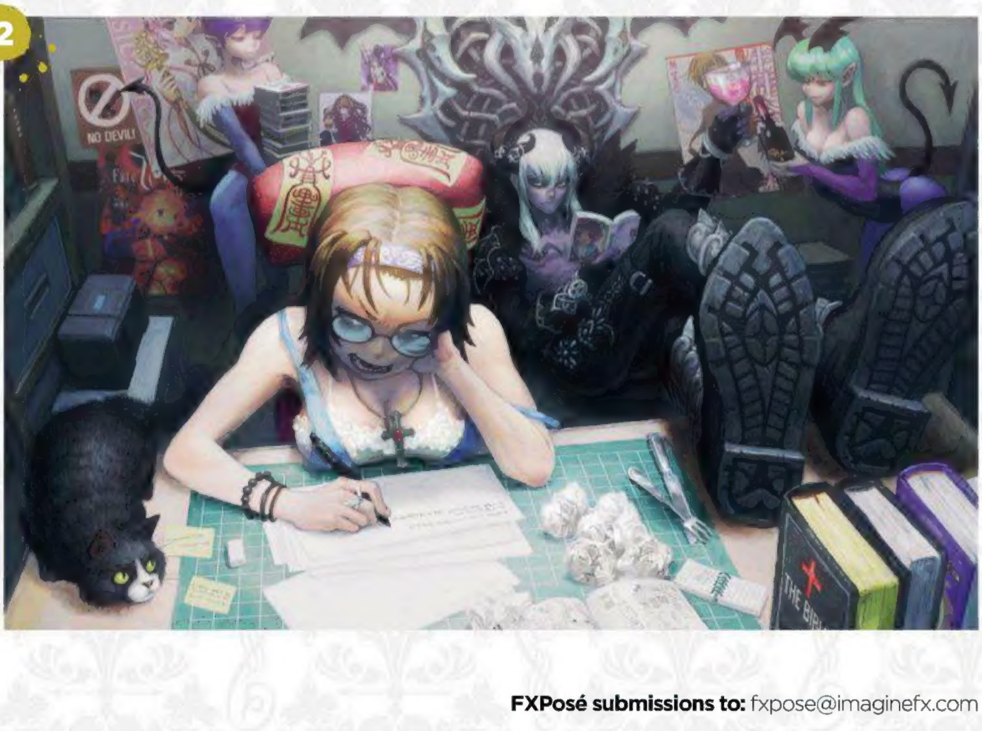

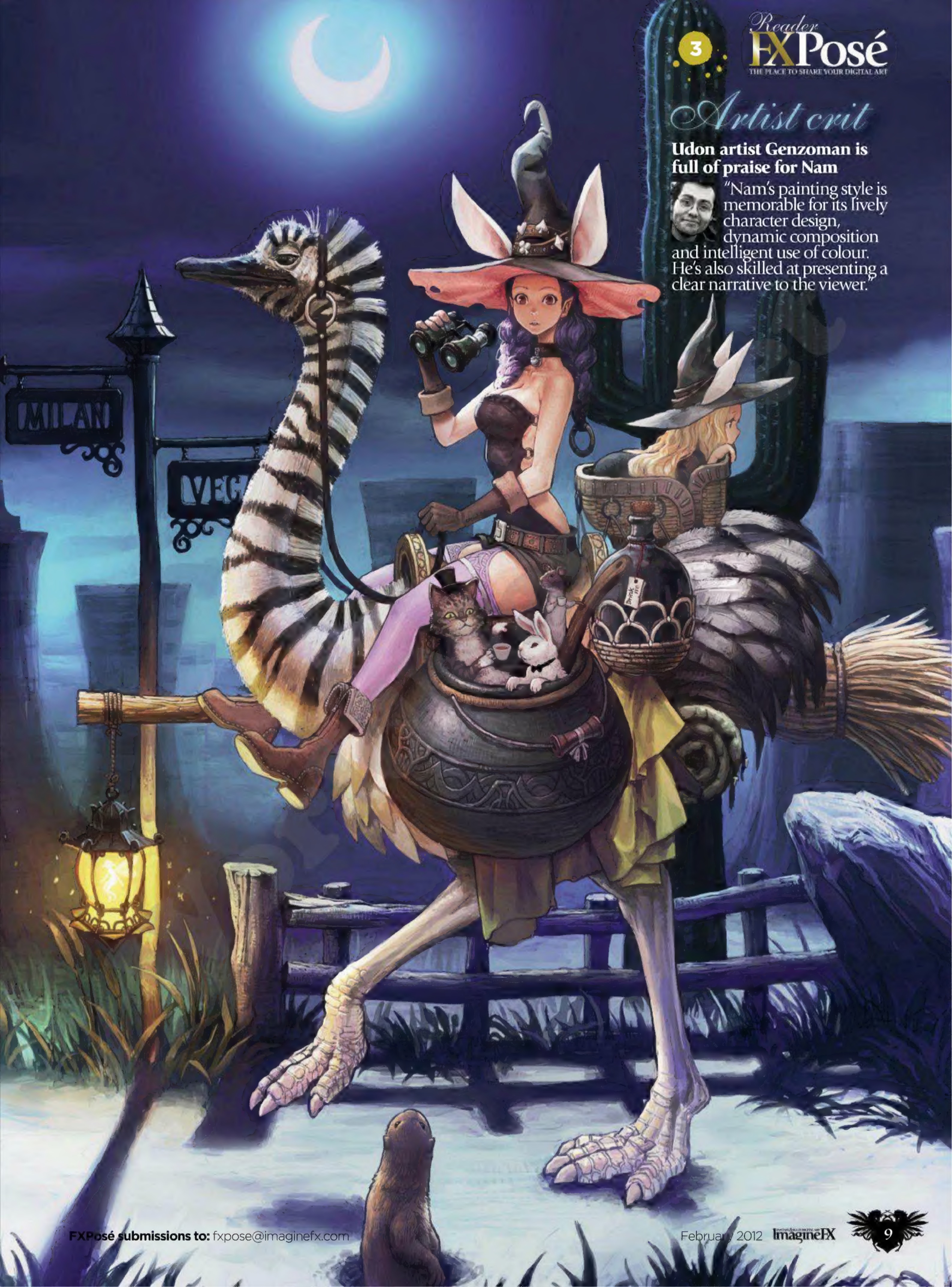

Artist crit

Udon artist Genzoman is full of praise for Nam

"Nam's painting style is memorable for its lively character design, dynamic composition and intelligent use of colour. He's also skilled at presenting a clear narrative to the viewer."

Adam Anderson

LOCATION: New Zealand
WEB: www.atanderson.blogspot.com
EMAIL: adamanderson@hotmail.co.uk
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Originally from Scotland, Adam is now a New Zealand resident working as a concept designer at Weta Workshop. "I've done design work for a vast array of projects, the majority of which are film-based," he says.

Even though he loves his job as an artist, there's another pull to working for the "Weta family". "The best thing about my job is the people I get to work with and be around everyday," he says. "They inspire me the most."

1 **PREDATOR** "I was trying achieve a dynamic image with a dragon. After getting frustrated with over-rendering the initial piece, I did a lot of hacking and chopping, free transforming and fast painting with grunty brushes. This image as you see now started to show through and it wasn't long before I called it done."

2 **FISHING** "I think this started out in Alchemy. I got a really stark black on white composition and tried to carry that through as I worked up the piece. I favoured the water because it softened the environment and decided to add the girl and fish fairly late on in the process, as I felt it didn't have enough punch."

3 **SNOW MOUNTAIN ASSAULT** "This was for an online environment challenge, but it wasn't long before I ran off in my own direction. I was trying to fuse a feudal culture with some high-tech elements."

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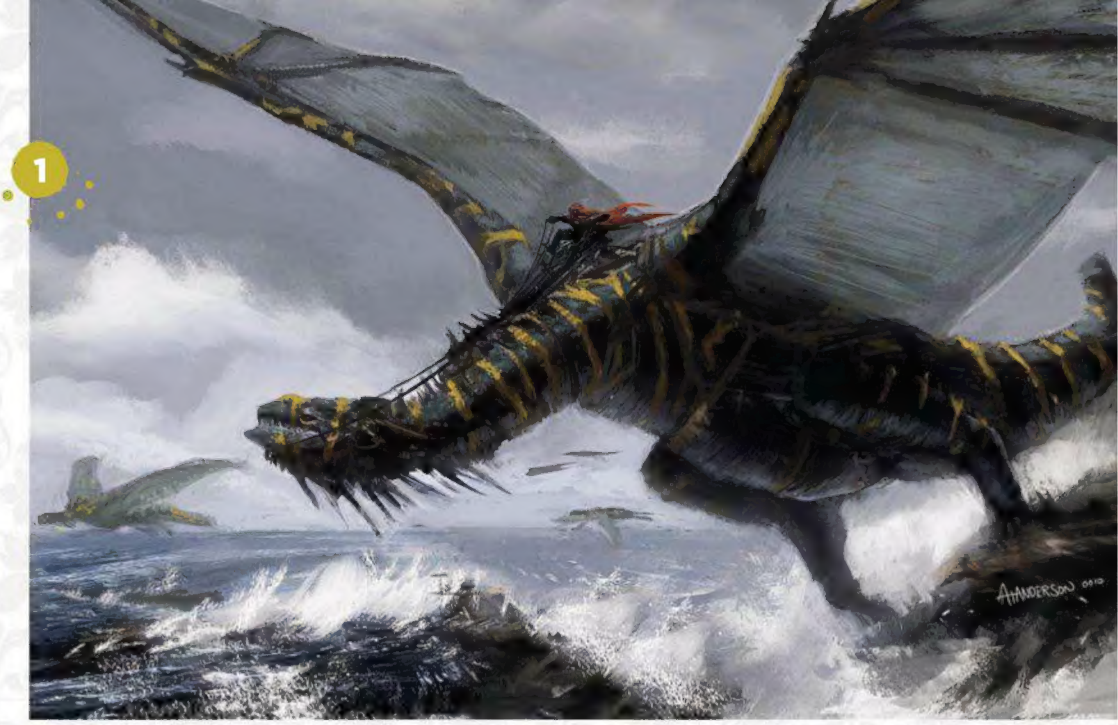

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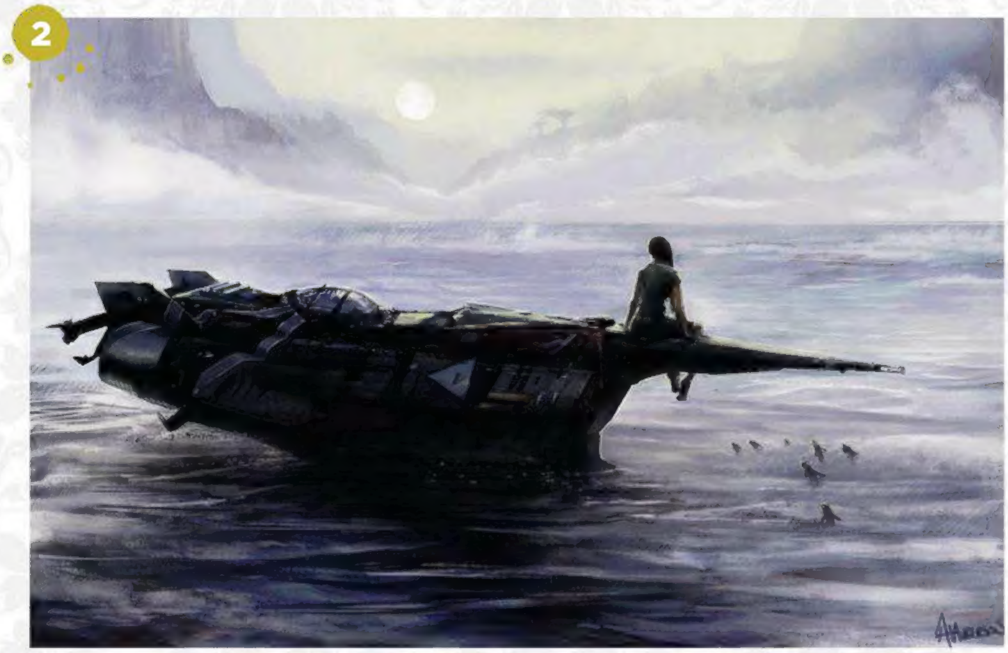

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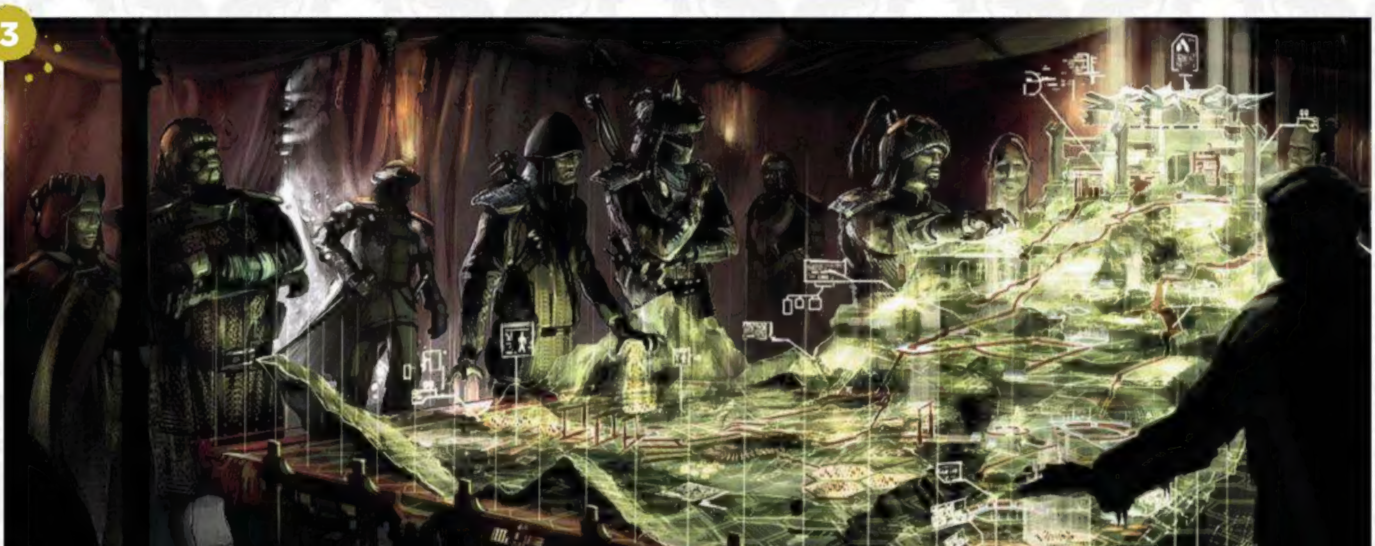

Eric Braddock

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.ericbraddock.com
EMAIL: eric@ericbraddock.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

A freelance illustrator working out of South New Jersey, Eric has been working steadily as an artist for the past few years. "I've been lucky to work on some really great projects so far," he says, "from working with Fantasy Flight Games on some of its games, to gallery shows in LA and even a project with DreamWorks Animation. I really can't see myself doing anything else."

Eric's one for self-improvement, and although he traditionally worked in oils while in school, he now works digitally and even experiments in 3D work. "I'm game for anything I can get my hands on to help make me a better artist."

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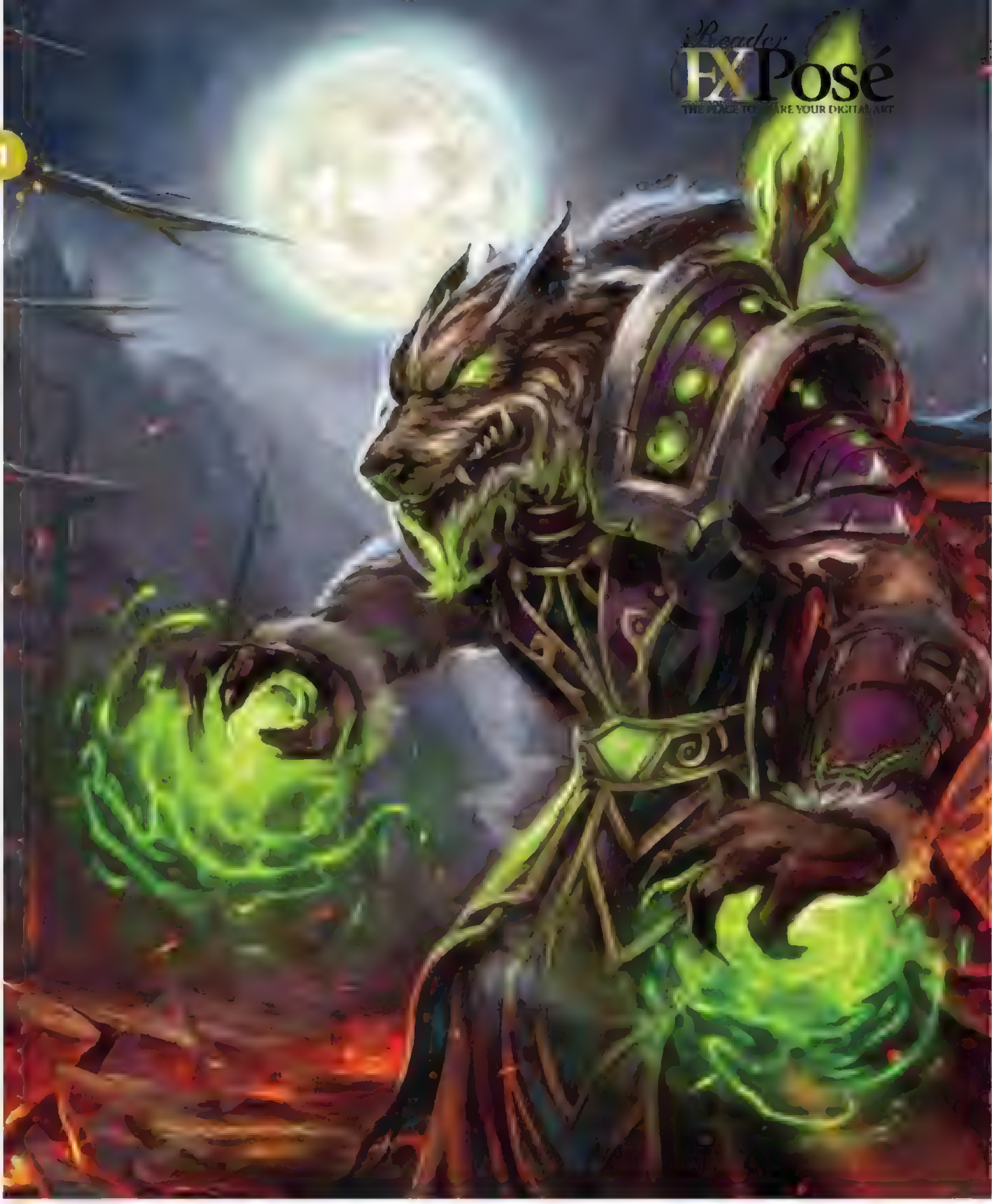
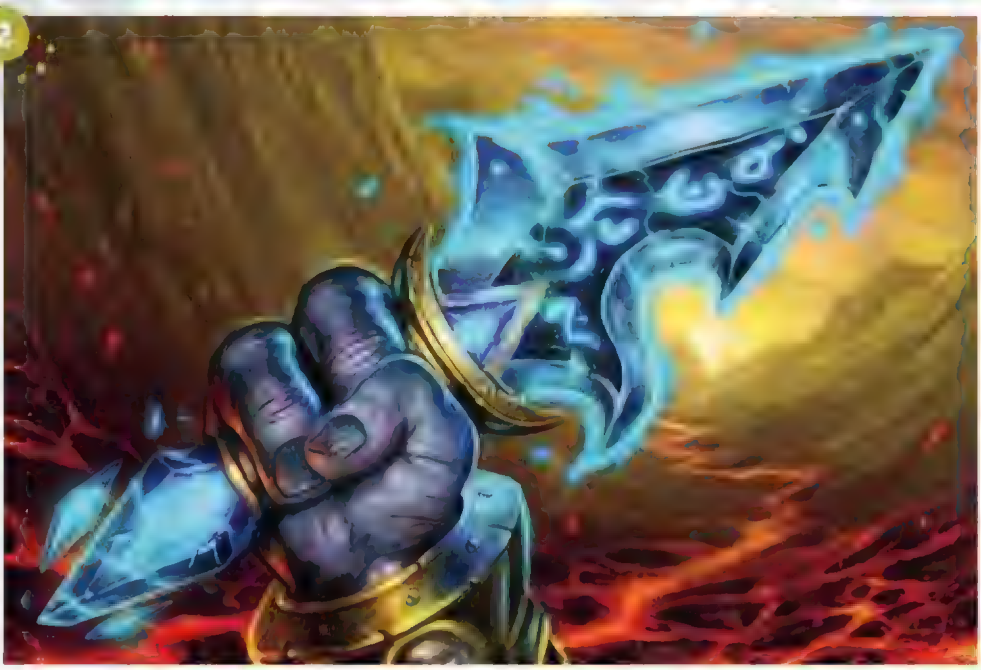


IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Eric has worked for Fantasy Flight Games but these two pieces are inspired by World of Warcraft. His take on the Worgen character is perfectly gnarled, and it's great he took his three-fingered image forward from its colour study origins."

[illegible],
Staff Writer

2



1 WORGEN MAGE "Lately I've been hugely inspired by Blizzard Entertainment's artwork and this one is based on one of the new races incorporated into the game, the Worgen. I find myself getting influenced by a lot of games lately. Any kind of inspiration that helps fuel the fire for me is something I don't ignore."

2 COLDSNAP MAGI DAGGER "This painting was meant to be no more than just a quick colour study for another idea that I'd been working out in my sketchbook, but once I felt excited by where it was going, I couldn't leave it at just a colour comp. I like trying out new colour schemes and figuring out ways to use colour in a harmonious way that helps to make for a dynamic, awesome-looking image."

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Nate Getz

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.nategetz.com
EMAIL: nate@nategetzillustration.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Art school was always going to be on the cards for Nate, having filled his youthful years drawing and reading comics, so it felt right going to art school. "I got into digital art while I was attending MICA," he says, "and in 2010 I graduated with a degree in Illustration."

Currently doing freelance for GCP Comics, Nate's process involves initial drawings, then scanning it and finalising it in Photoshop. "Recently I've been doing more and more art directly in Photoshop," he says, "thanks to all the artists in ImagineFX for sharing the tips."

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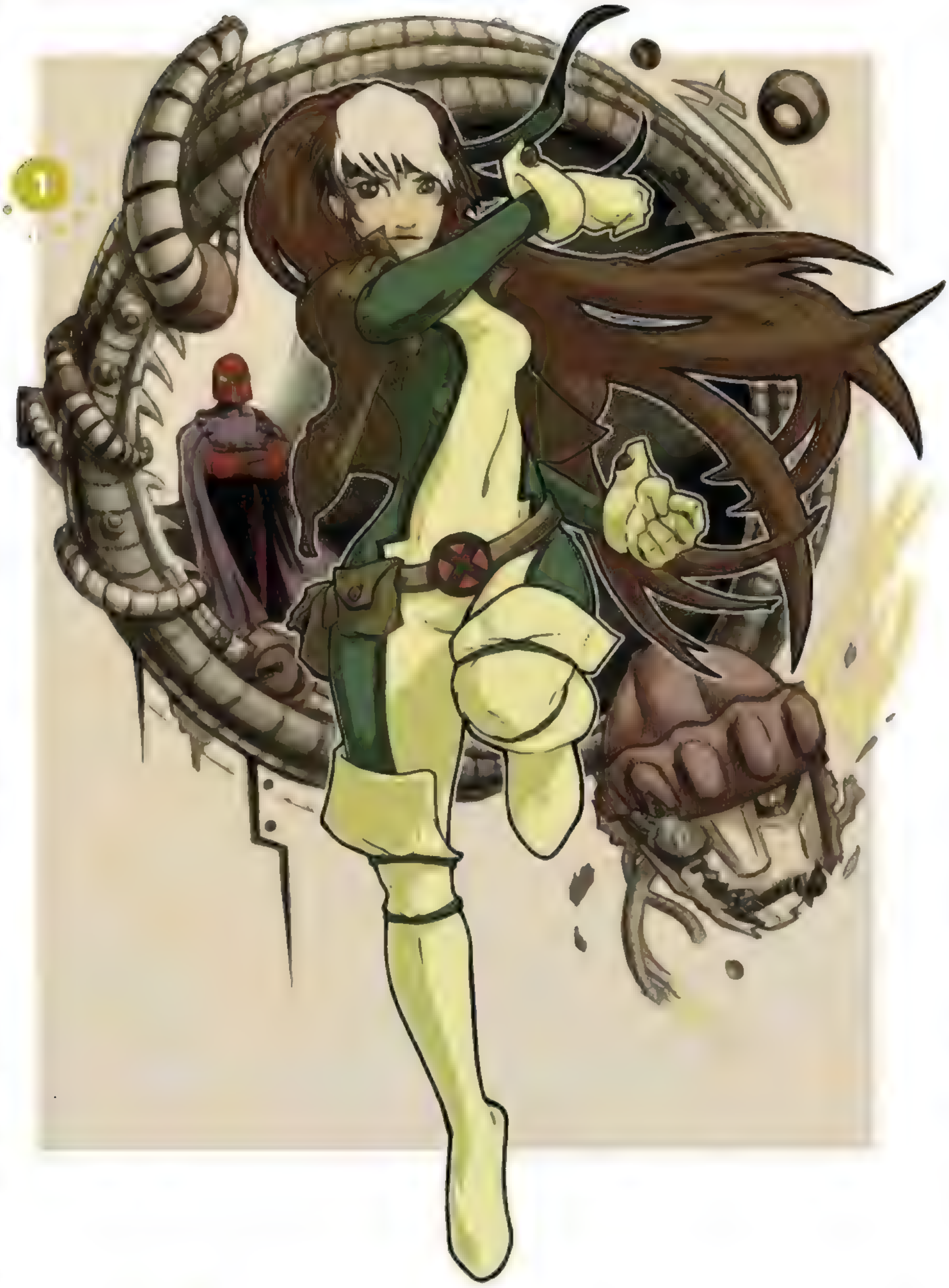
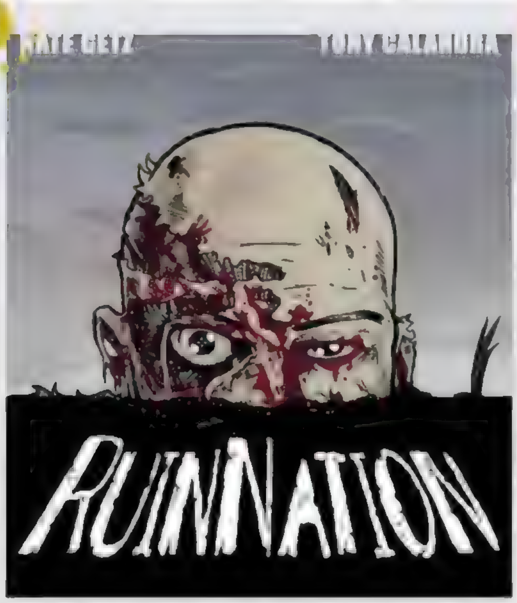


1 **ROGUE** "She was done during my time at MICA. I was experimenting with a combination of styles, taking some inspiration from Art Nouveau and comic books."

2 **RUINNATION COVER** "This was given away as the free promo piece at Free Comic Book Day 2011 for the GCP Comics title RuinNation. I wanted to focus on the zombie aspect of the story and gave a nod to the theatrical poster for 1978's Dawn of the Dead."

3 **PIRATE GIRL** "She was originally a pencil commission, but I liked it so much I coloured it and plan to use it as an upcoming promotional piece. I was just having fun with the pirate thing and this is what came out."

2



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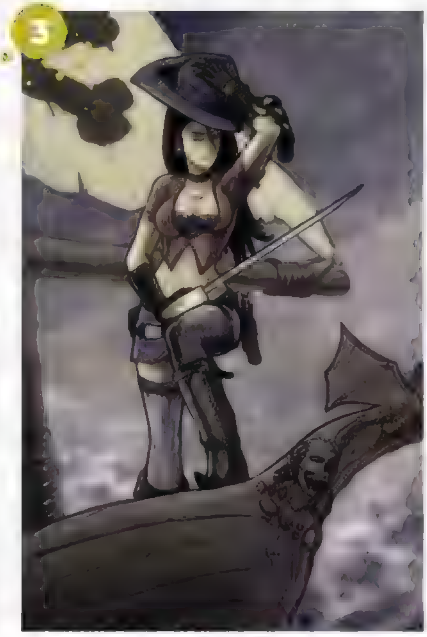

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Solid line work, bold shadows and a flair for a striking pose make Nate's comic images stand out, giving us a new youthful spin on some old, established comic heroes."

Ian Dean
Deputy Editor

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Kory Cromie

LOCATION: Canada
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EMAIL: koryrkory@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, ZBrush

"I'm a recent graduate – some would say survivor – of Seneca College's Animation Arts programme," says a relieved Kory. "When I was 15 I saw paintings being made on a site called Mess Studio and becoming thrilled about the possibilities that working digitally offered."

After a stab at becoming a 3D game artist, Kory was steered into becoming a concept artist by fellow professionals and friends. "Since then I've been developing a concept art-focused portfolio that takes advantage of my knowledge of 3D that my non-tech savvy self had to suffer horrifically for."

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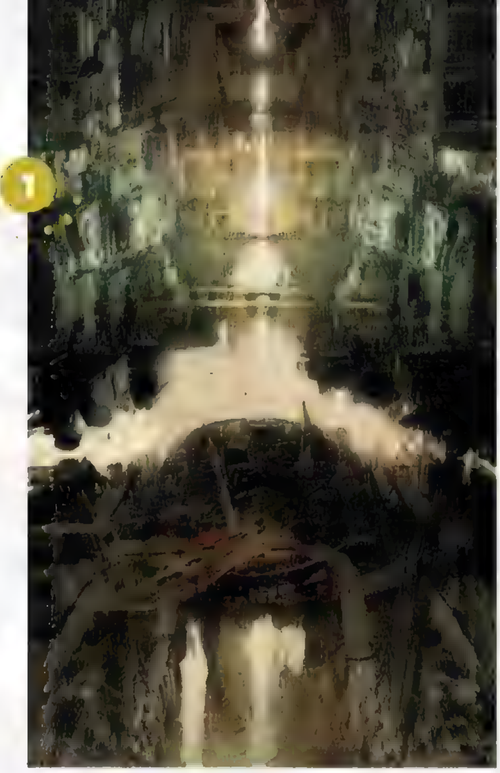
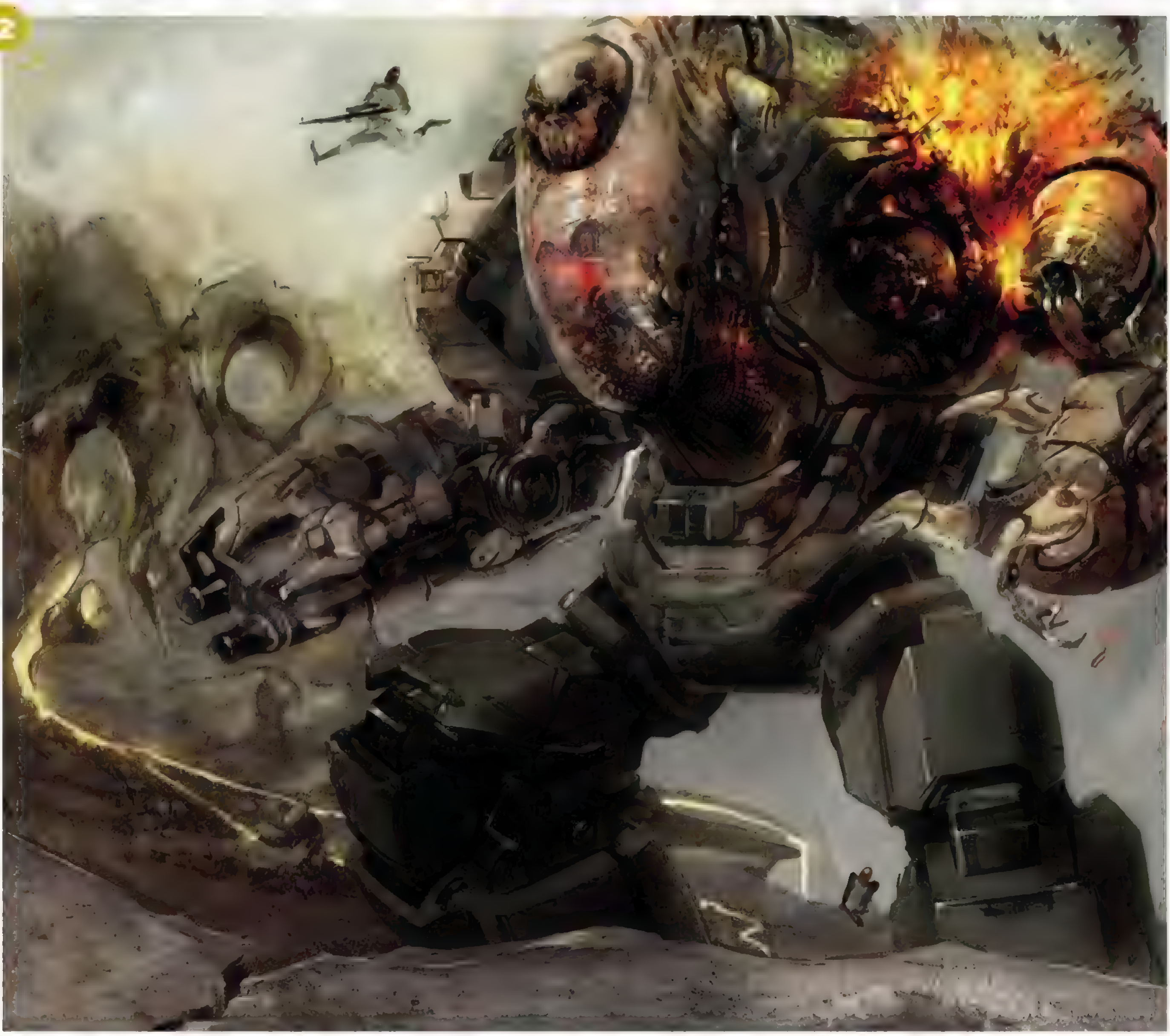


1 **UNITRON SKY BASE** "This started life as a incomplete painting of a city I gave up on, but I followed ImagineFX's advice on hanging on to old PSDs, and as a result I was able to turn it into a painting of a city in the sky."

2 **BOSS ROBOT IN OPERATION** "I remember this starting as a small revision of an earlier painting, and it ended up being a whole new painting altogether. A friend suggested the Gulliver's Travels kind of motive, which resulted in the painting having a welcome hint of humour."

2



FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Anna-Maria Jung

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.jung-comics.com
EMAIL: amjung@gmx.at
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Anna-Maria's imagination first hooked onto the fantastic narratives of movies, cartoons and comics in her birthplace of Austria. She published her first graphic novel Urbanity when she was just 18, fulfilling her dream of becoming a visual storyteller.

"Since then I've studied multimedia arts with a focus on traditional animation," she says, "as well as producing various other comics and working with renowned animator Bill Plympton in New York."

She's currently living and working in New York City, producing illustrations for the editorial market, children's books, graphic novels and apparel.

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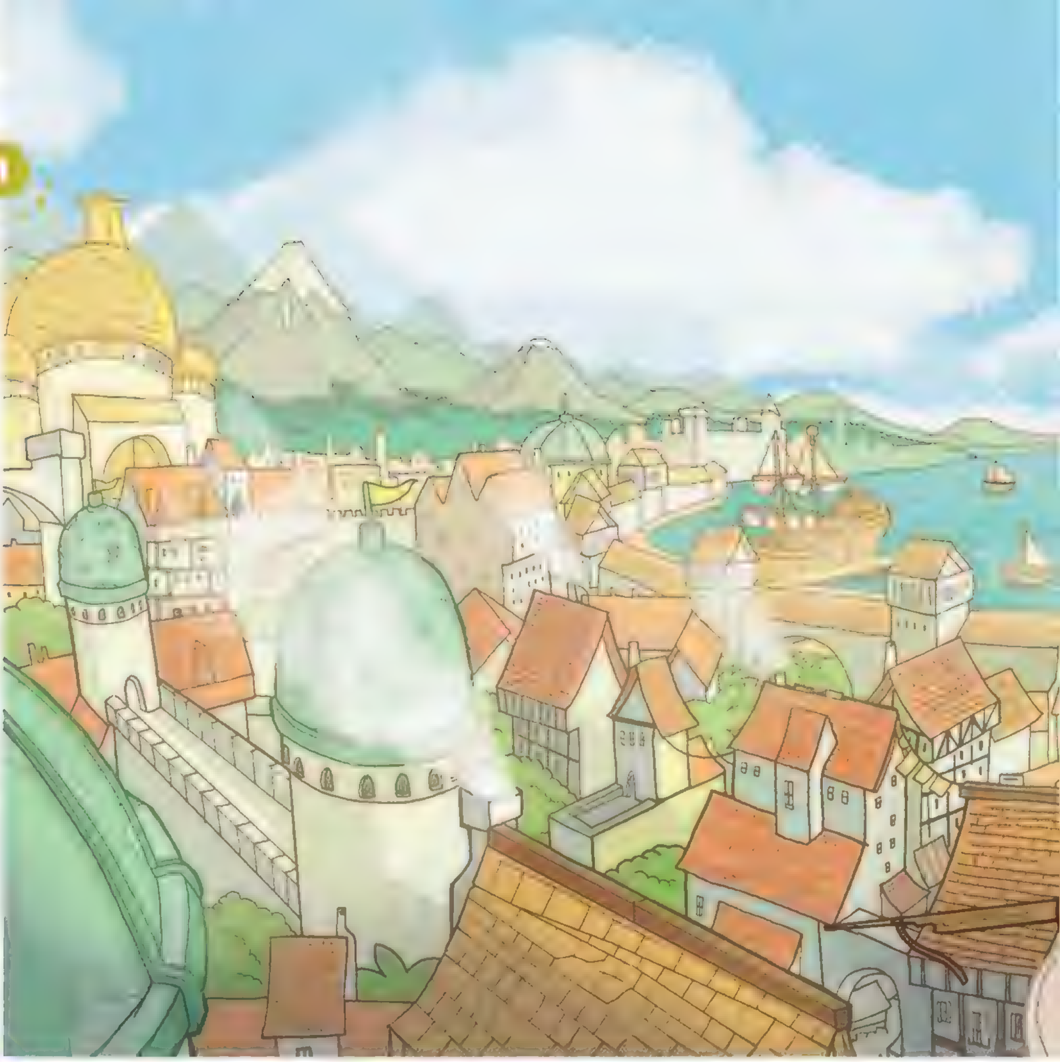

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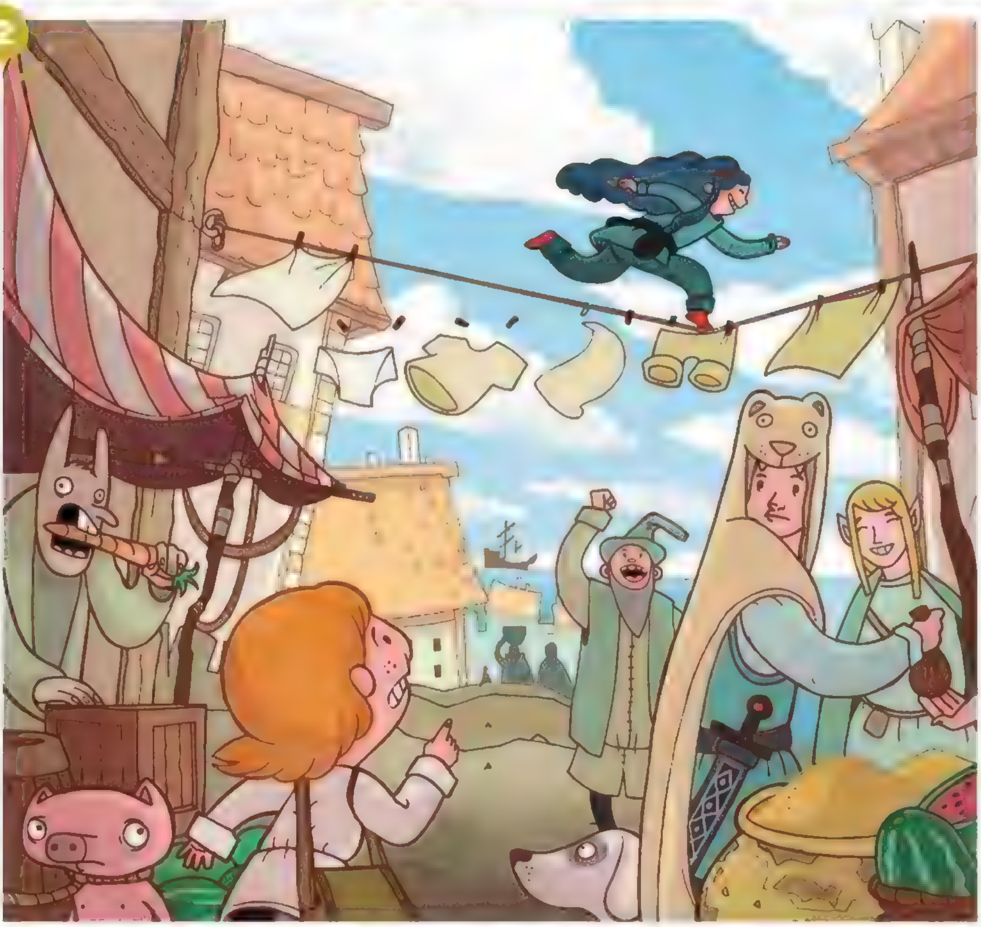
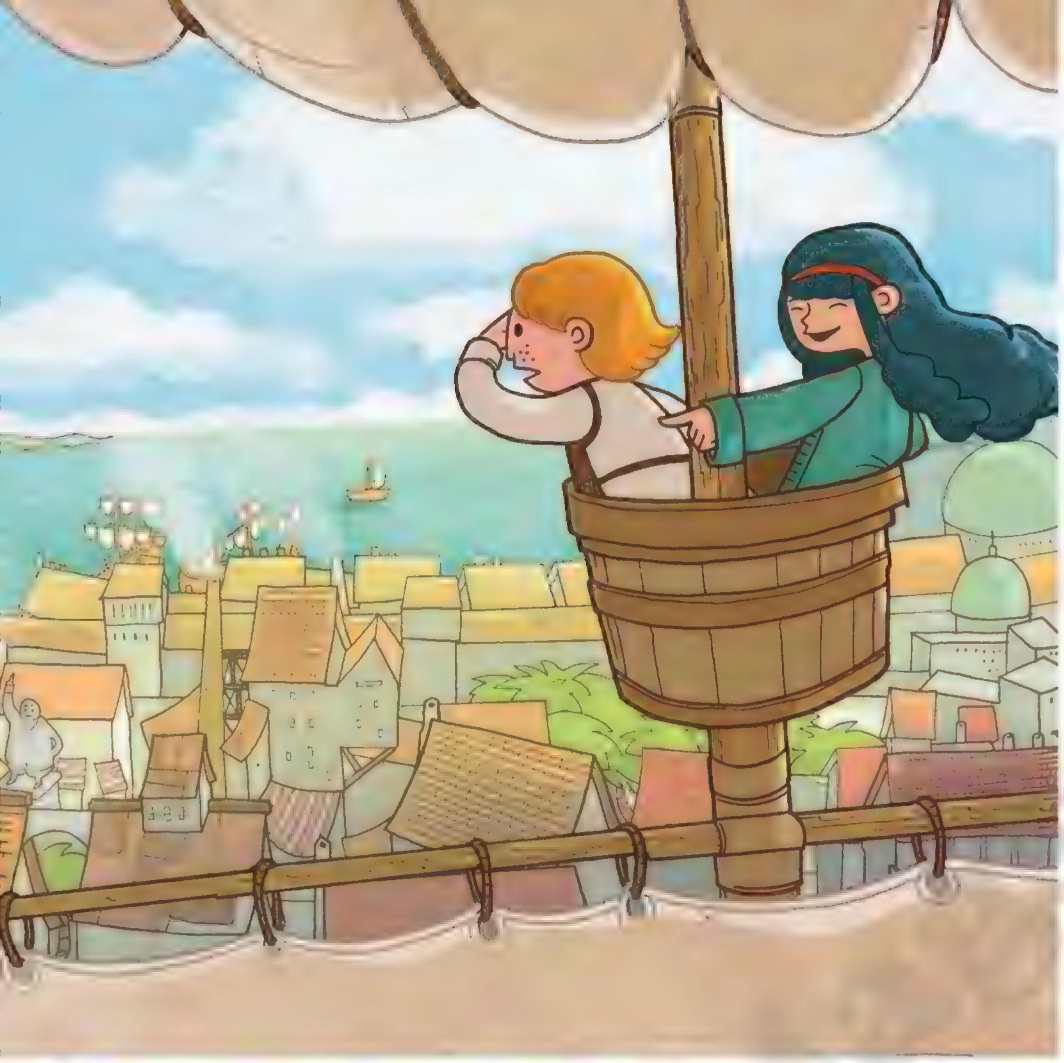


1 THE CITY "In this page of the children's book project the main character is at the top of a shipwreck, looking down at the magical, fantastic city. This was a challenging illustration, but it was great fun drawing all the little buildings. I was heavily inspired by Western Orientalists and concept art for movies in this image and wanted to create an image of urban beauty."

2 THE CHASE "In this scene the book's main character, the little scribe Zoo, chases after a thief girl who took away the bottle of ink the scribe needs for the day. I paid a lot of attention to directing the eye towards the action with composition, and I'm very happy with how the colours turned out in this."

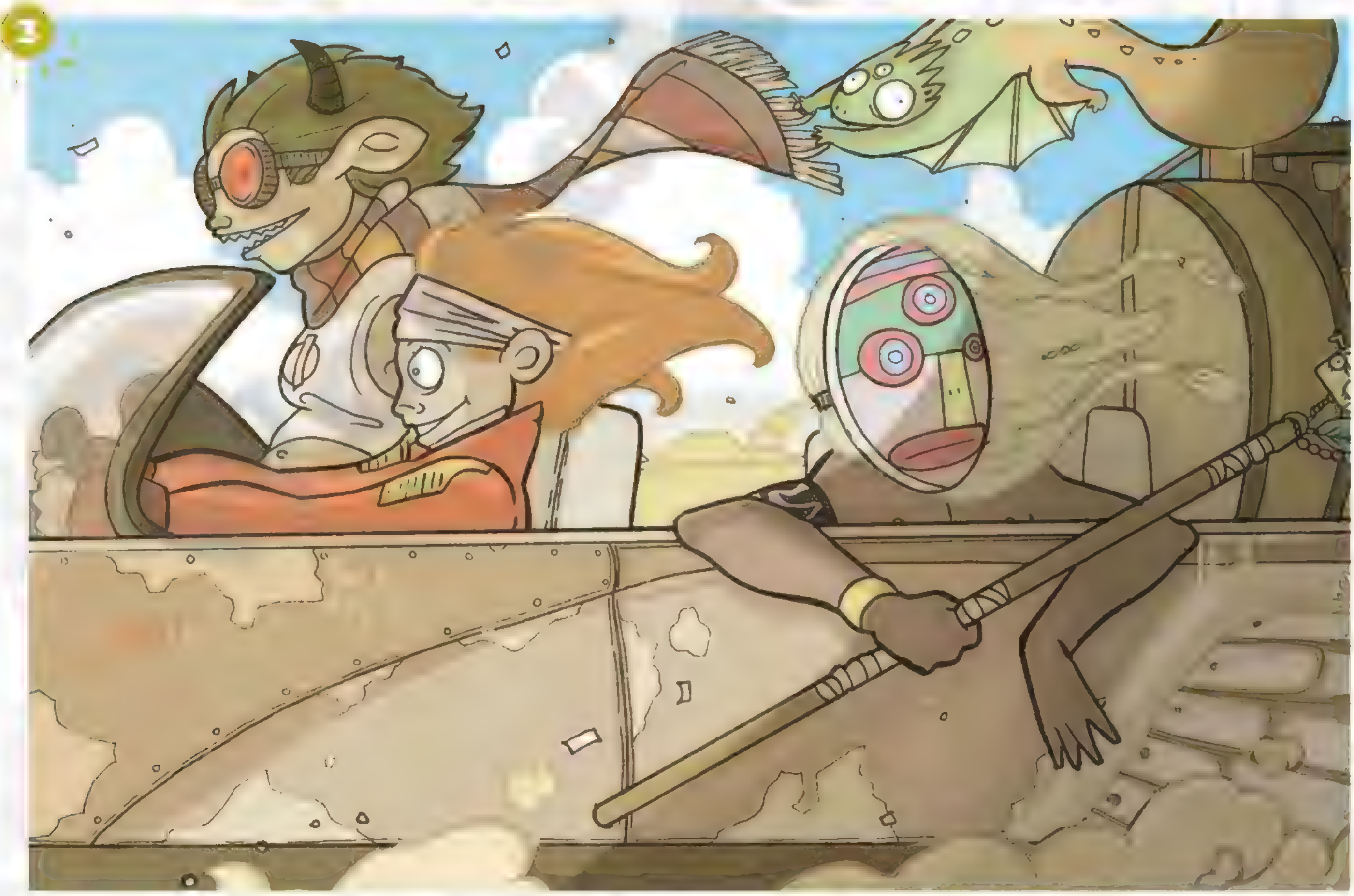
3 ON THE ROAD "I love drawing characters in motion, when lots of things are happening in one picture. This image should carry this feeling of freedom one gets on a road trip, when the warm summer wind plays with your hair. There's nothing better for me than combining the traditional animation style of cartoony characters and coloured outlines with the cinematic feeling of movies."



IMAGINEFX CRIT

"I really like how Anna-Maria has used composition and perspective to catch the drama and point of focus in The Chase. The hustle and bustle of market life has been supremely crafted using bold lines and fantastic colour selection."
Daniel Vincent
Art Editor

3



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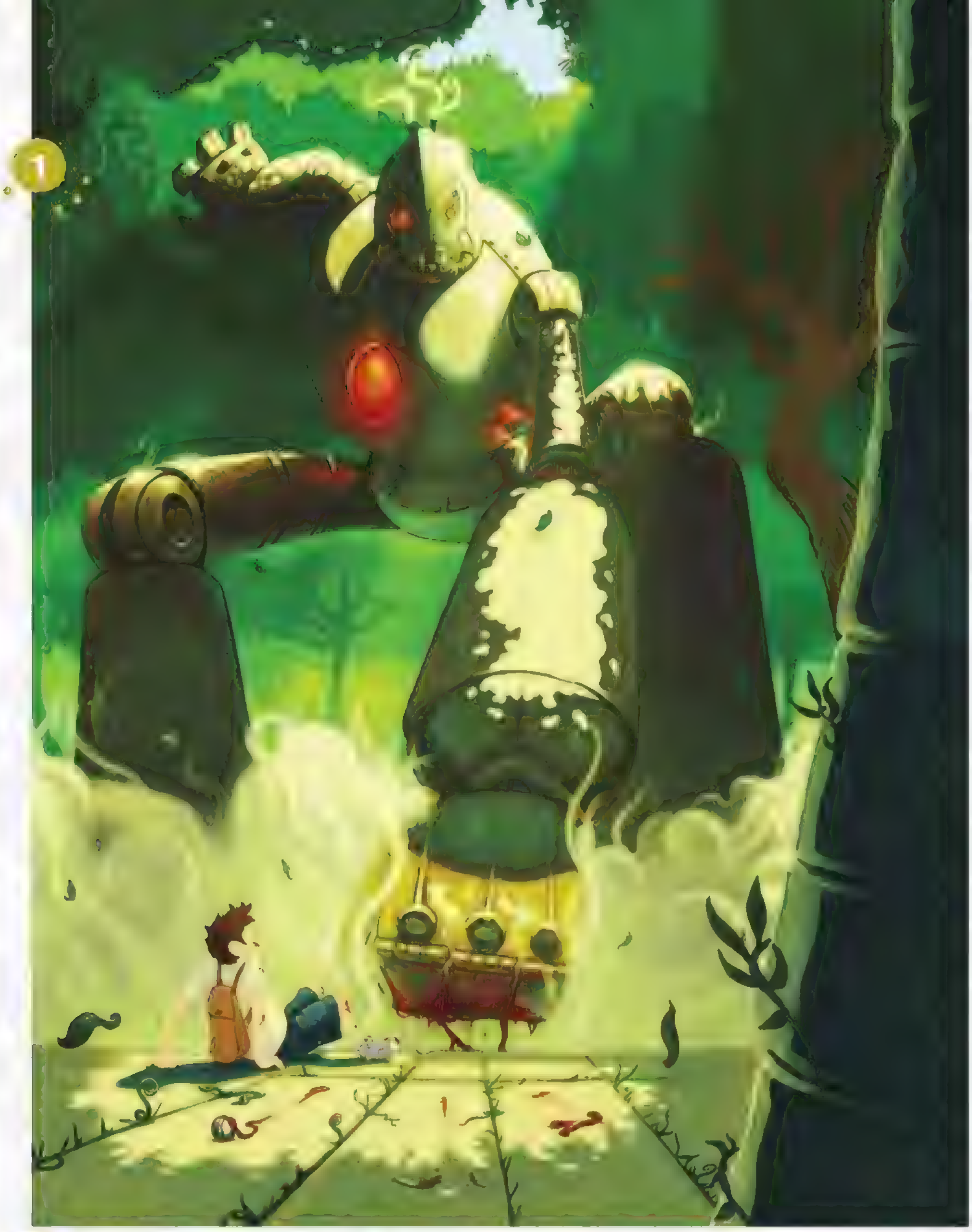


Guy Atherfold

LOCATION: England
WEB: www.guyatherfold.com
EMAIL: gatherfold@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

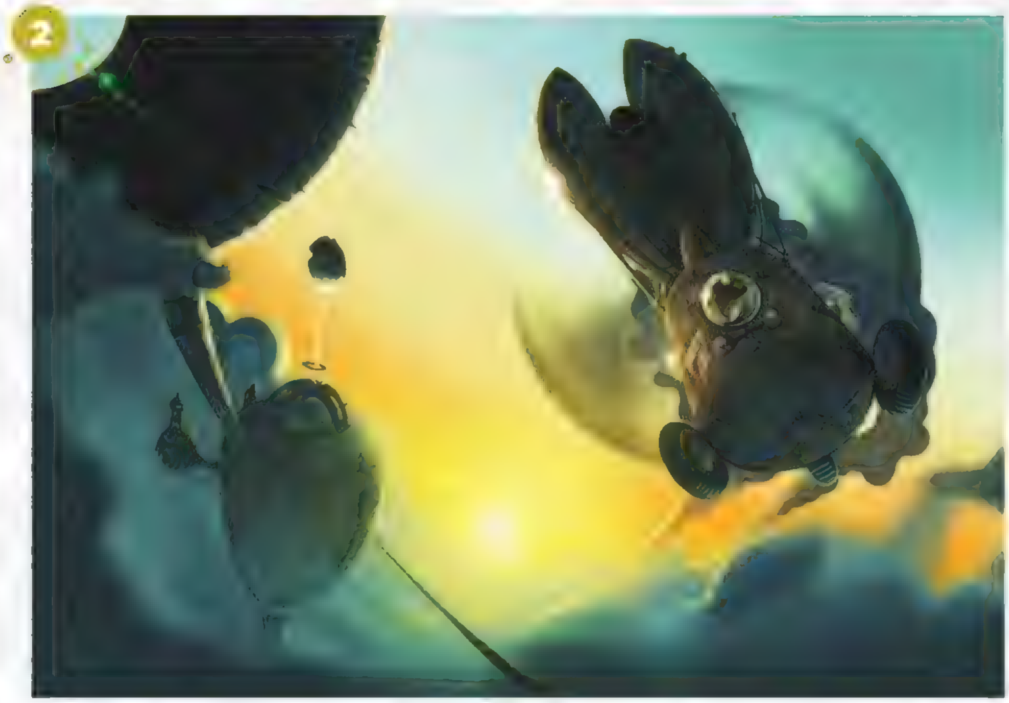
Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, Guy was never short on fantasy and sci-fi inspiration. "It was everywhere," he says, "from films such as Star Wars, The Dark Crystal and Krull to TV shows like Transformers and Battlestar Galactica."

Guy eventually settled on a job within the design industry, but he never lost his love for drawing. "Finally, a couple of years ago I decided to get back to my drawing roots," Guys tells us, "so I dusted off my tablet and set about producing new illustration work to promote myself as a freelance illustrator." Since then he's been commissioned to work on various projects and has just completed a storybook for the Children in Europe organisation to help them learn English.

1 **JUST IN TIME** "This piece is based on a children's story that I'm writing. In this scene I wanted to create an intense moment, like something big had just happened. I love to use bright, bold colours and defined strokes in my work. I find it helps to emphasise the child-like themes in my pictures."

2 **FLIGHT TO THE CITY** "Here I got the chance to create a flying machine for my story. I looked at stepping away from the usual aeroplane shapes, and tried playing around with numerous configurations from helicopters to jet engines. In the end I amalgamated the two and added exhausts showing smoke spewing out, like a steam train."

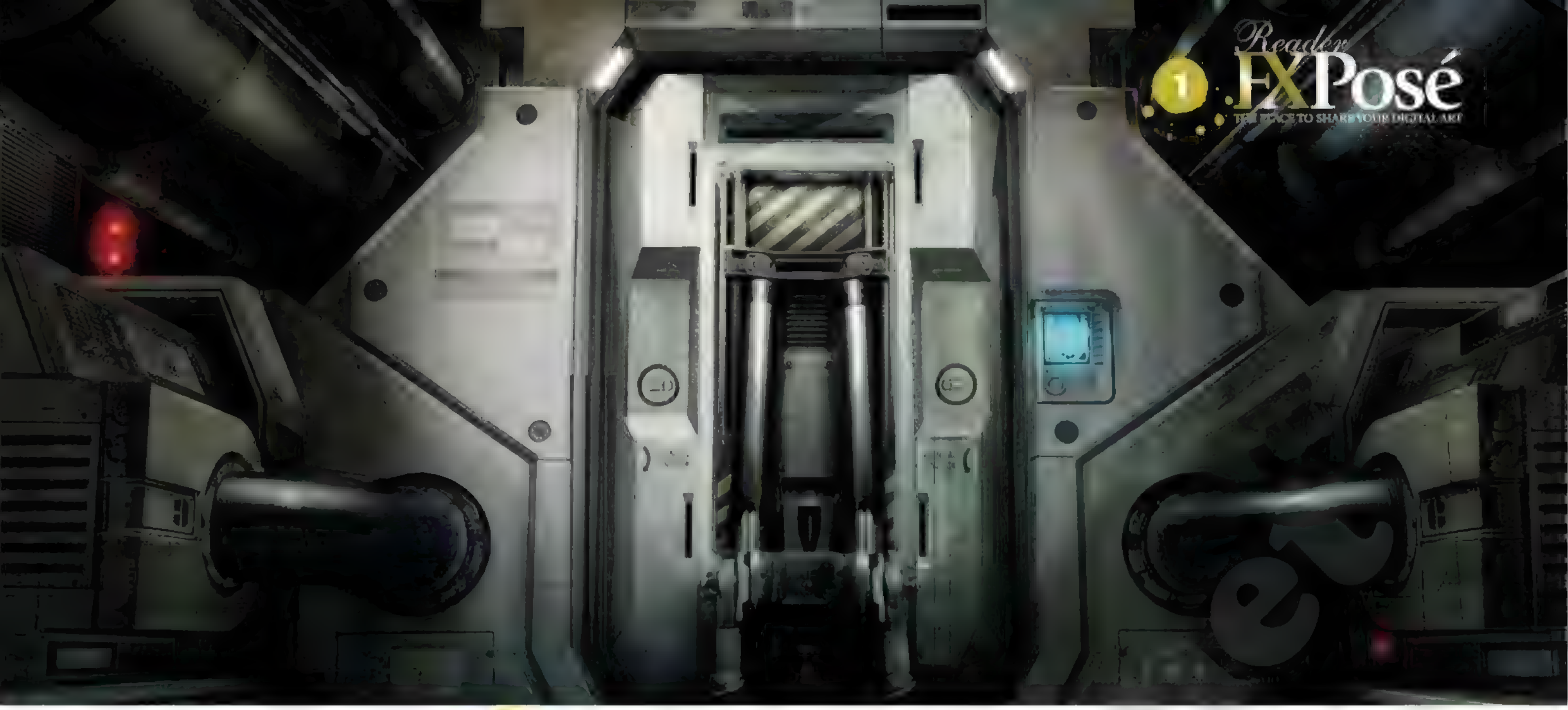
2



IMAGINEFX VERDICT

"Guy's got a great use of natural light going on in his work, whether it be rays of light coming through a tree-top canopy, or that of a setting sun. The objects in his scenes are also well drawn and recognisable – a key factor if he's aiming for younger readers."

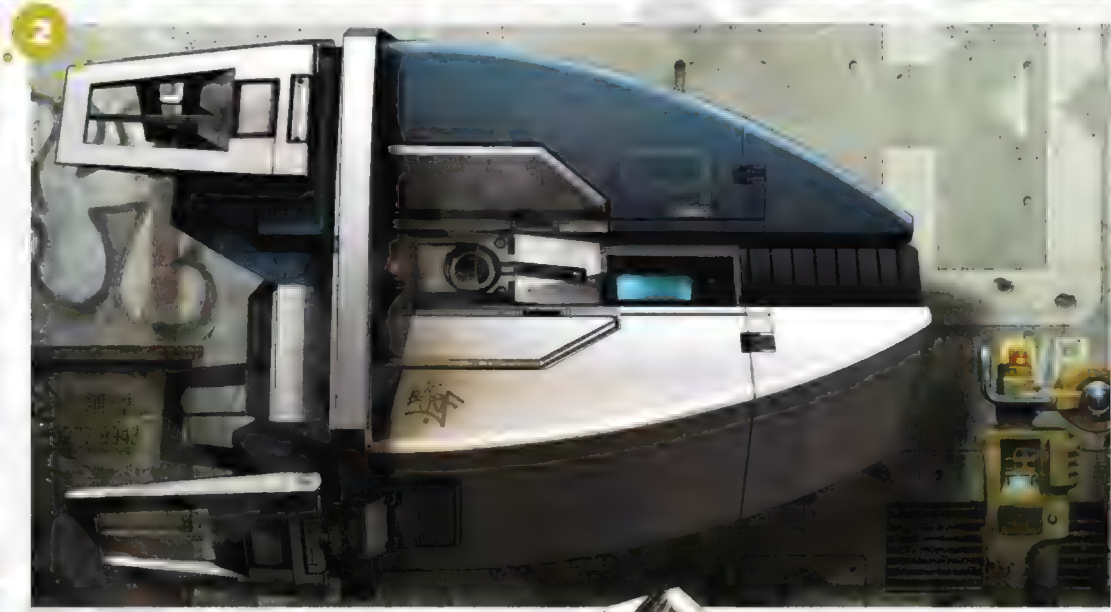
Cliff Hope
Operations Editor

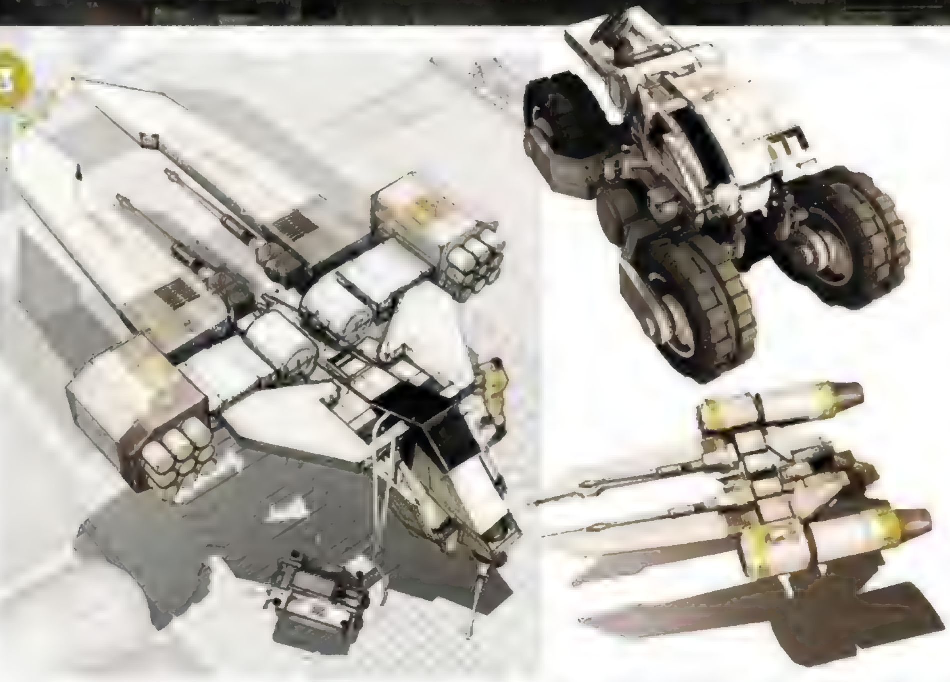


Eric Lloyd Brown
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.bit.ly/eric-brown
EMAIL: ericlloydbrown@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: SketchUp, Photoshop

"I'm a professional prop and concept designer working at Cartoon Network and currently freelancing on TRON: Uprising for Disney, set to air in summer 2012," says Eric. "The majority of my work, both personal and professional, usually involves starting in SketchUp and finishing in Photoshop."

Eric certainly has his digital routine finely tuned, but that doesn't mean there's no room changing things up now and again. "As an artist in television animation you typically work in black and white," he tells us, "so it's a great joy for me to work in colour when I can, and it's even better when there's some kind of science fiction machinery involved!"





1 MUTANT CONTAINMENT FACILITY "This is one of the first images I did for my new art book Autodraw. It's a concept piece for a script I'm working on that involves mutated humans and a secret facility in which they're kept. I created a simple block model in Sketchup, produced a quick render in Keyshot, then finished it in Photoshop."

2 URBAN TRANSPORTATION "The idea behind this concept was that someone got hold of an old, abandoned EEV from a spaceship and re-purposed it for use as everyday transportation in an urban environment. This piece makes me want to go beyond just straight design and introduce more narrative into my work."

3 MOON-BASED VEHICLES "These were done for a personal project and was also a chance to experiment with styles in SketchUp and transfer them over to Photoshop for more experimentation. The goal was to produce something more like a rough marker sketch, rather than a more rendered, final design."

Thomas Foxmarnick

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.numbpigeon.deviantart.com
EMAIL: mejarskull@earthlink.net
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Illustrator

After a childhood of reading comics in his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio, Thomas's only formal training was a two-year stint at The Kubert School. "In 1980 I moved to Los Angeles where I contributed comic stories and art to CARtoons magazine," he recalls, "and I started working in TV animation in 1991."

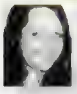
Since then he's been a production designer on over 35 different series and worked for Disney, Universal, Warner Bros. and Nickelodeon. "In 2005 I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and retired from studio work," says Thomas, "which was a mixed blessing because I believe my disability has made me a better artist! I've produced over 120 illustrations as well as the ones shown here in the past two years, and have no intentions of stopping."

1 **MERLIN** "I wanted to do an image of the famed wizard, but didn't want to do that silly dunce-conical hat! So I thought a Jewish Merlin would be cool... and he is! I also like the monkey paw lemonade. This was a successful and popular piece all round. Sometimes it just all comes together..."

2 **XENOFRATBOYZ** "Just another Saturday night on Sub Delta 9. A residue purge from my CARtoon days... I would dedicate this to the late, great Shawn Kerri. And again, the drawing works but the rich, subtle painting brings it to another level."

3 **A BARBARIAN OR THE BARBARIAN? YOU DECIDE** "This piece shows the influence of one of my favourite illustrators Barry Windsor-Smith. What makes a savage brute appear civilised is stylised jewellery. And a little Photoshop doesn't hurt!"

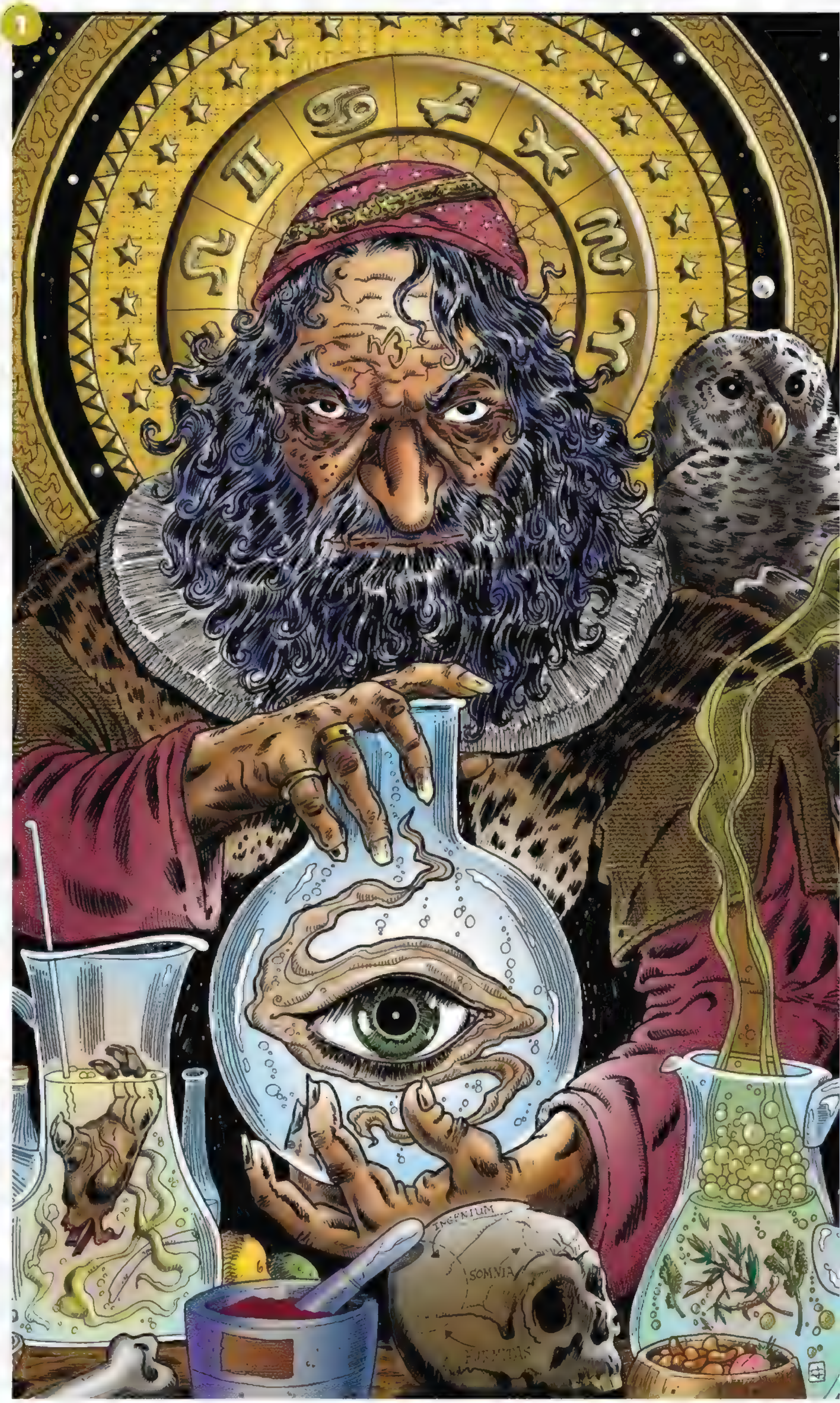
IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Thomas's line work creates a great sense of movement and energy; you can almost see Merlin's potions bubbling and writhing about. I love the concept of a civilised barbarian who takes time out from his plundering and savagery to keep his sword glistening."

[illegible]
Designer

1



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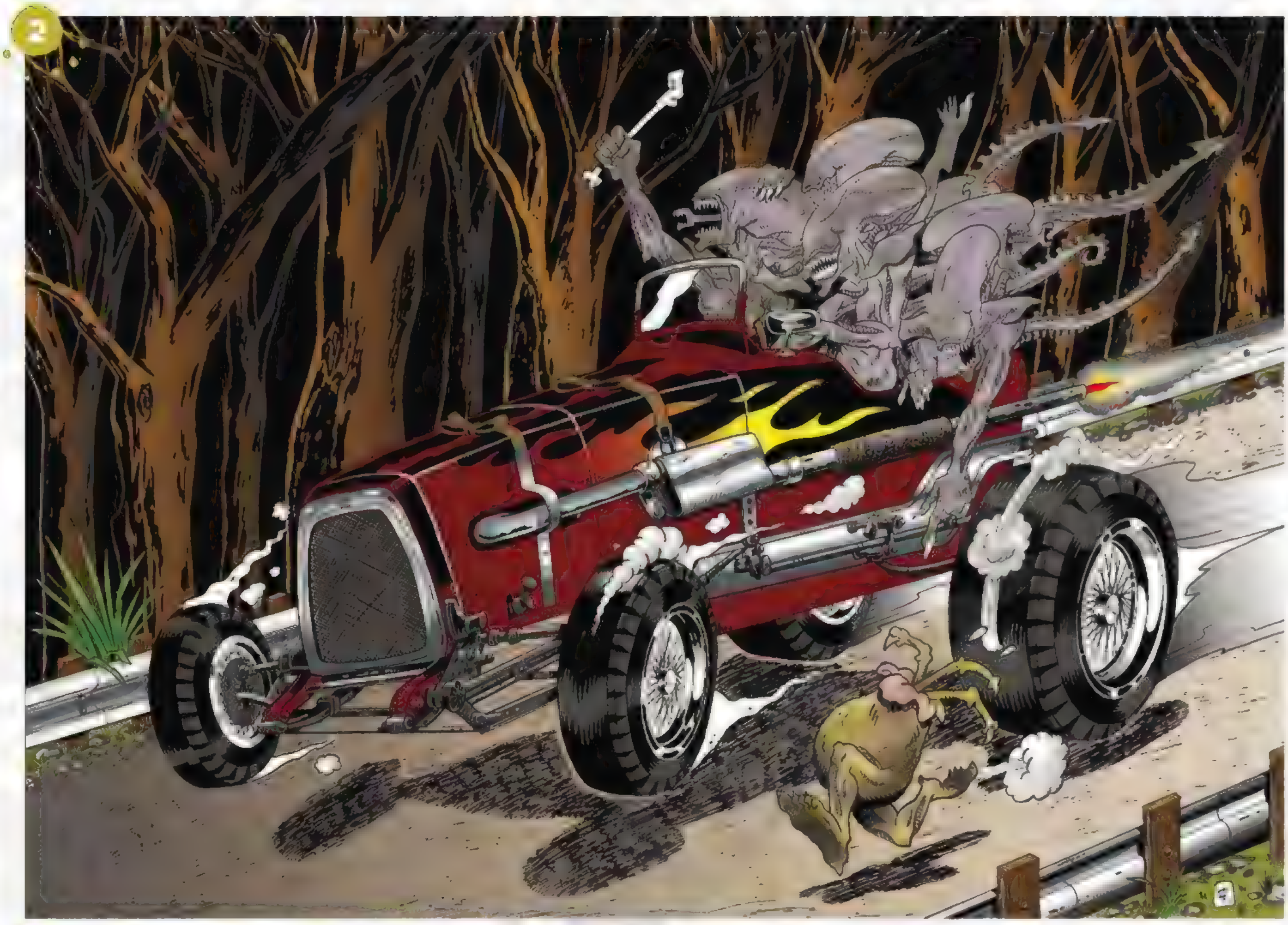

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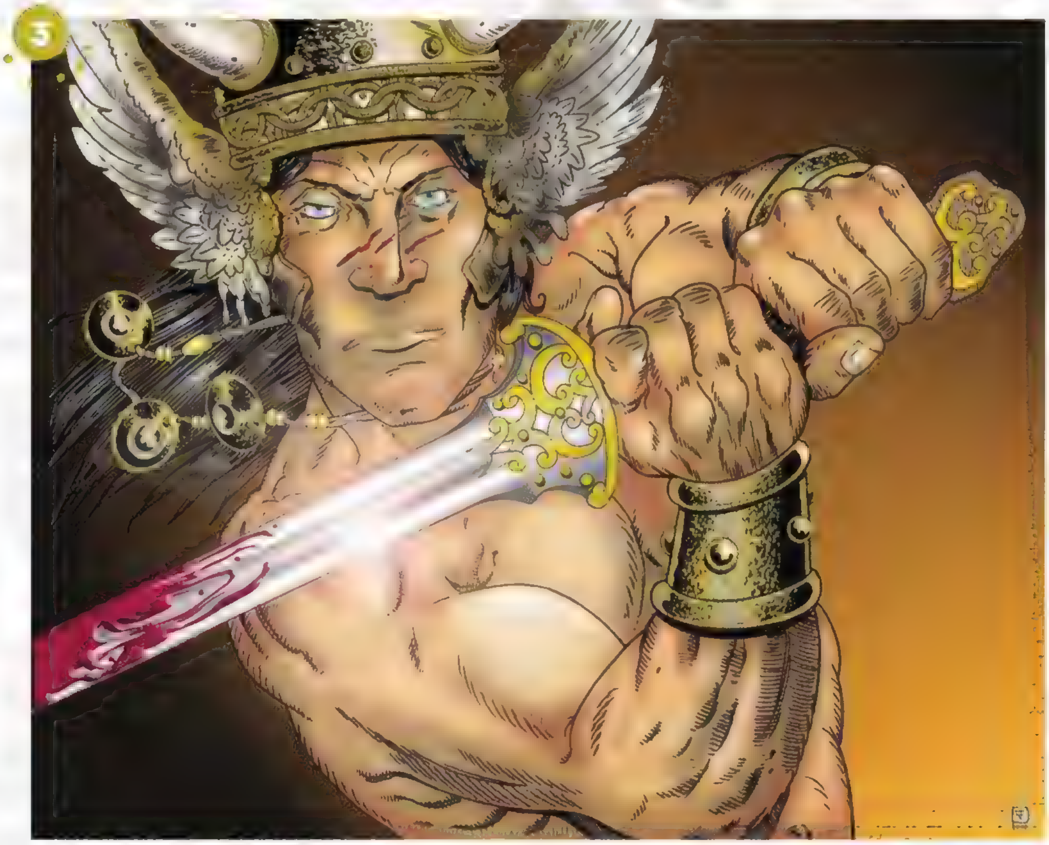
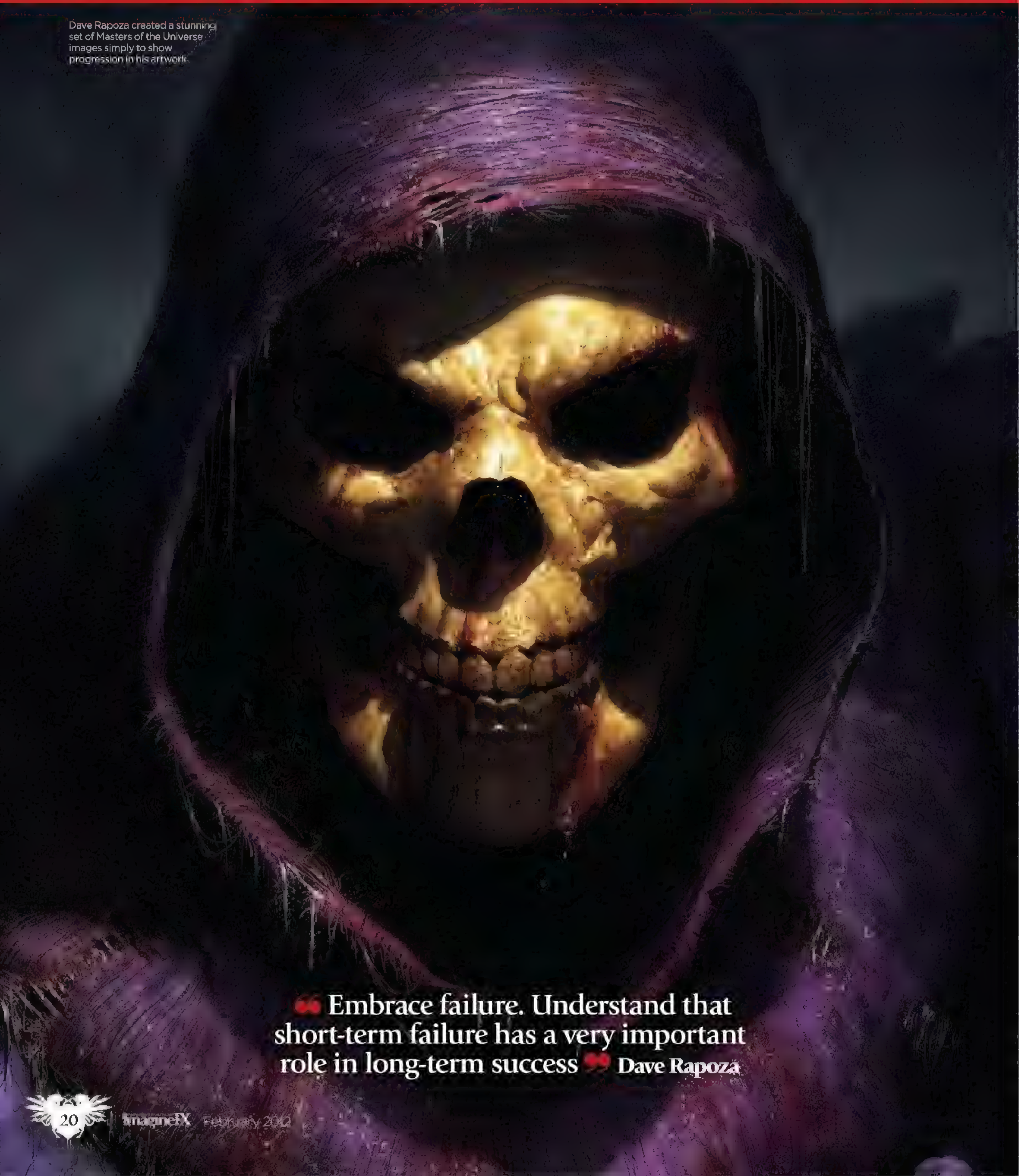


SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them. **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:
FXPosé
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK



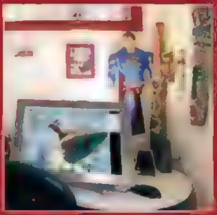
Dave Rapoza created a stunning set of Masters of the Universe images simply to show progression in his artwork

> “Embrace failure. Understand that short-term failure has a very important role in long-term success” **Dave Rapoza**

FANTASY FANATIC

Does Craig Mus[illegible] ever sleep? The steampunk geek, artist and serial art website creator has self-published a new sci-fi and fantasy book

Page 23



REVEALED: THE TROOST

Proving not every professional artist needs a palatial office to work their magic we take a nose at Remko Troost's "drawing hole"

Page 24

WHAT'S THE STORY?

We were so taken with the cover art on the latest Exotique book that we tracked down artist Chris Ng to find out more about how it came about

Page 26

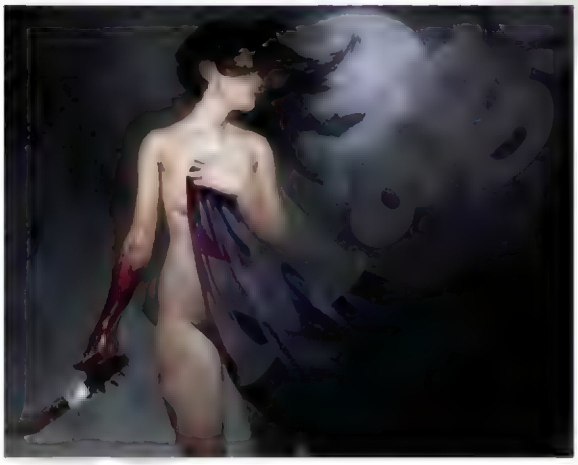
Master your art universe in 2012

Time for a change We ask four artists, at four different stages of their careers, why 2012 is the right time to set goals and strive for perfection

Depending on your favoured source of apocalyptic prophecy, December 2012 offers the mother of all deadlines – the end of days. If you're more interested in art deadlines, the start of this formidable year also promises the chance for real change; to take stock and sketch out 12 months that'll make you a better artist.

One approach is to radically change your environment. Take Miles Johnston, a digital rising star still in his teens, who moved to Sweden at the end of 2011 to attend Atelier Stockholm and focus on traditional art for 2012. "Constantly being around so many talented artists has really helped me to focus on my art without completely losing all human contact," he says. Furthermore, watching how those other artists overcome traditional obstacles has been eye opening: "It's taught me to be more efficient and purposeful with the way I work in Photoshop."

Moving to Sweden is not for everyone of course – in fact you can also achieve greatness without leaving your house.



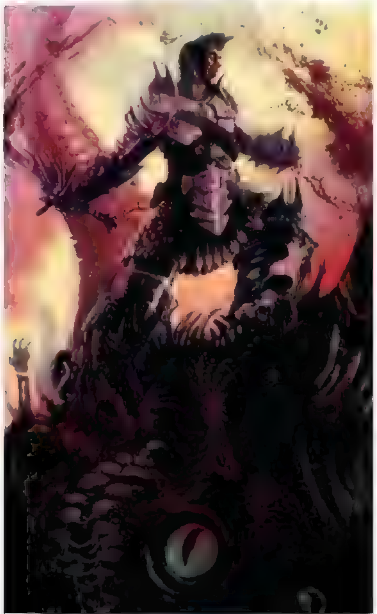
Above, UK artist Miles Johnston moved to Sweden to be around other artists at the Atelier Stockholm.

Dave Rapoza started up Crimson Daggers (**www.crimsondaggers.com**), a free online study group with live – and lively – broadcasts around the world. The site's palpable enthusiasm and artist involvement is testament to its success.

Dave is now passing the Crimson torch to Dan Warrens, and they've launched Crimson Daggers Deathline Challenge – a challenge of grand scope and inspiring intension. "In 2012", says Dan in his blog announcement, "I wanna challenge everyone to achieve their top three personal goals to the absolute best of their abilities."

This goes beyond the realm of art, warns Dave: "We're also talking about things that may not be directly art related, but that will effect personal productivity." Losing weight may result in more energy; organising emails, bills and things that usually slip through the net could leave a clearer mind for your art.

The Deathline is open to everyone who's up for a life-changing experience. "Embrace failure," suggests Dave, "and understand that short-term failure has a very important



Left, Autumn (more overleaf) is now mastering dramatic environments and grittier fantasy.

JOIN THE IMAGINEFX CHALLENGES

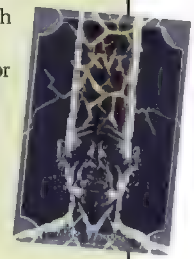
We ask our forum mods what's in store for 2012

What's so good about being a part of the IFX forum?

Charlotte Ahlgren (Voluspa): "The fact that there are so many people to help with either an art or tech problem is priceless. It's a condensed world of knowledge, with amateurs rubbing shoulders with the likes of Marta Dahlig. Plus the ImagineFX team participates, creating a stronger connection with the magazine."

And what are your grand plans for the forum in 2012?

Karen Wright (Kaz): "I now run the challenges, taking the torch from banjaxedmdt. Banj's idea for the weekly challenge was to stretch people with different topics, and I'm carrying on that tradition, with the help of a challenge topic suggestions thread. A recent tarot card challenge was very successful and we now have a bi-weekly challenge to design a tarot card from the Major Arcana – which will last a year, hopefully, ending up with our very own ImagineFX tarot deck! There's also our 365 Day Sketch Challenge. It's a fantastic way to improve speed and skill."

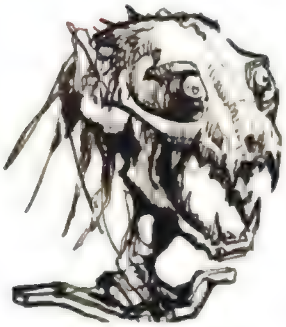


Charlotte Ahlgren (Voluspa): "I hope to continue working part-time, which is something I do to get more time and energy for painting. I like financial security as much as the next person, but I think if one can afford it the extra time to paint is worth it!"

*Get involved with the forum challenges now! Head to the Tarot Card Challenge (**www.bit.ly/ifx-tarot**), and the 365 Day Sketch (**www.imaginefx.com/sketchaday**).*

www.imaginefx.com/myfx

Continued from previous page…

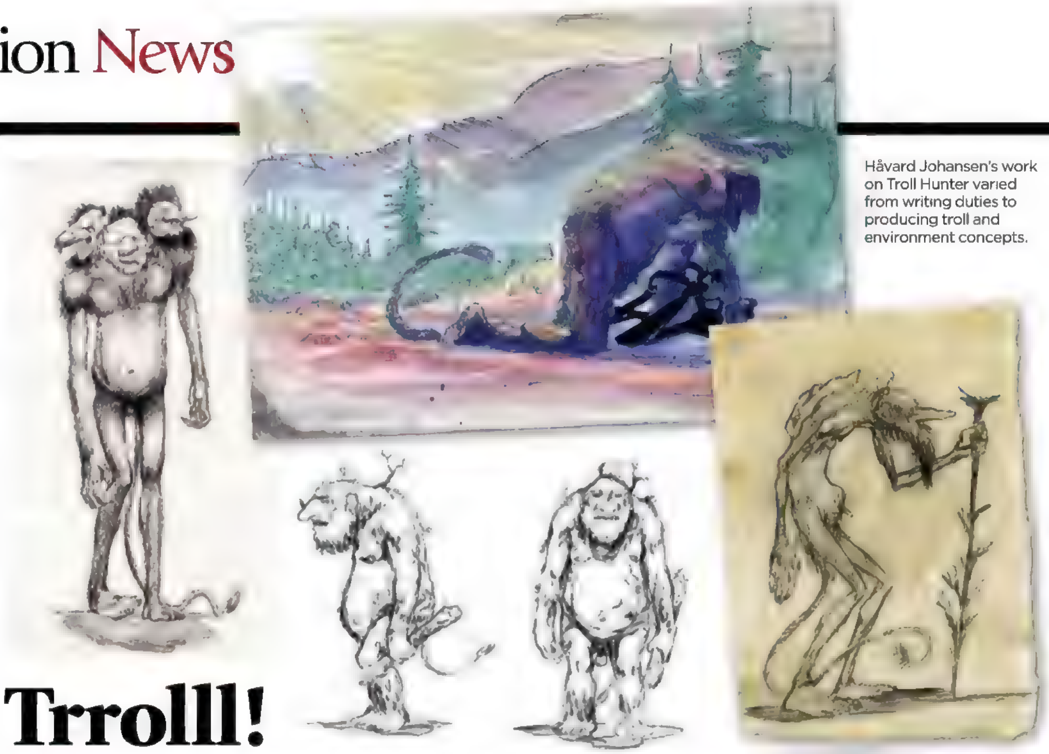


Inspired by the masters, Marshall wants to perfect his pen and ink.

role in long-term success." Setting lofty goals is good. Realising the mountain that you've got to climb is impossibly steep is the next step. "Nobody should set out on any sort of goal thinking the goal is the point," says Dave. "It's not about end results, it's about the challenges along the way and how you choose to address and overcome them."

Autumn Turkel found himself in an artistic cul-de-sac, limited in his output to the work he did for Nickelodeon, struggling to get varied freelance. He took the plunge and started freelancing for different clients, including the fast-turnaround world of advertising agencies. He says 2012 offers more room for change: "I'm going to hit the books, on environments, going out and doing traditional and digital alla prima paintings of Los Angeles landscapes."

The trick, it seems, is to never think you've arrived as an artist. Even with 30 years' experience, which he currently shares through his excellent online courses (**www.marshallart.com**), Marshall Vandruff is still aiming high. "With drawing, I just want to master pen and ink," he says. "My approach has always been carefully planned. When I saw the slapdash fearlessness of Heinrich Kley and Van Dyck, it was like seeing a drunk throw a cue ball at a pool table and watching every ball, in rhythm, fall into the pockets one after another. That keeps me drawing."



Håvard Johansen's work on Troll Hunter varied from writing duties to producing troll and environment concepts.

Trrolll!

Folklore We take a peek behind the low-budget smash hit Troll Hunter and discover a mythical world in its fantastic sketches

As primary concept artist on the monster movie Troll Hunter, Håvard Johansen was well suited for the job. Not only had he worked with director André Øvredal over the years, and was also involved with the writing of the film, but trolls are in his blood. "I don't feel ownership over the trolls," he says. "They're part of Norway's folklore and an artistic satire tradition."

Håvard certainly uses that long artistic tradition to his advantage. "I was inspired by the illustrations of [turn of the century Norwegians] Theodor Kittelsen and Erik Werenskiold." You can see anatomical similarities in the trolls' noses – all the better for sniffing out Christians – yet Håvard was in sync with what the director wanted. "I threw a ton of sketches at him first, then we chose four. The three-header was the toughest one to make realistic, but the Raglefant in the film looks as it did from my sketch."

See more of Håvard's art at **www.havardjohansen.blogspot.com**, and read our review of the film on page 108. The region 2 DVD version will be available from 9 January.

On the hook

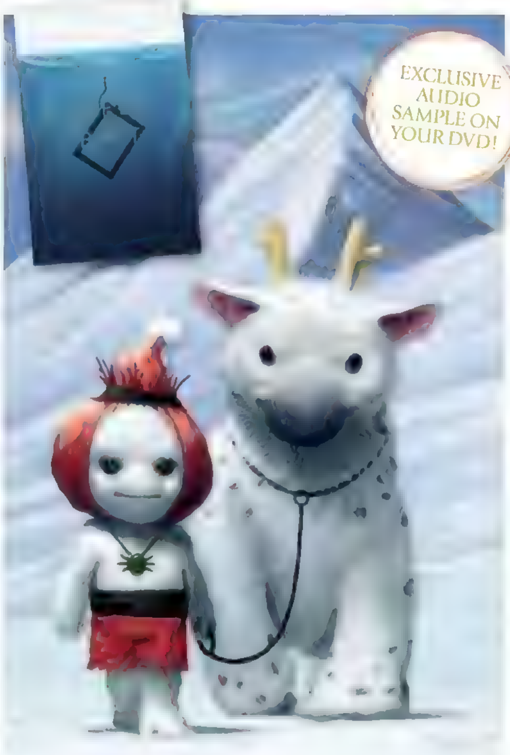
Life's work Bobby Chiu shares a brand new image to celebrate his new audiobook The Perfect Bait

Everyone who's worked with digital artist Bobby Chiu knows he's got a fierce work ethic. What's less obvious, however, is that throughout his professional career he's been making notes for a book full to the brim with helpful insight for aspiring artists. The Perfect Bait is that book, on sale now for $14.99.

We're pretty impressed with the artist's foresight. Bobby actually started on it as a struggling college student. "I thought about making a book on how to become a successful artist from the viewpoint of somebody who wasn't successful yet," he tells us. "Over the next 10 years I wrote down all the thoughts and methods that worked for my career so that if I ever did become successful, I would have a clear step-by-step of how I did it."

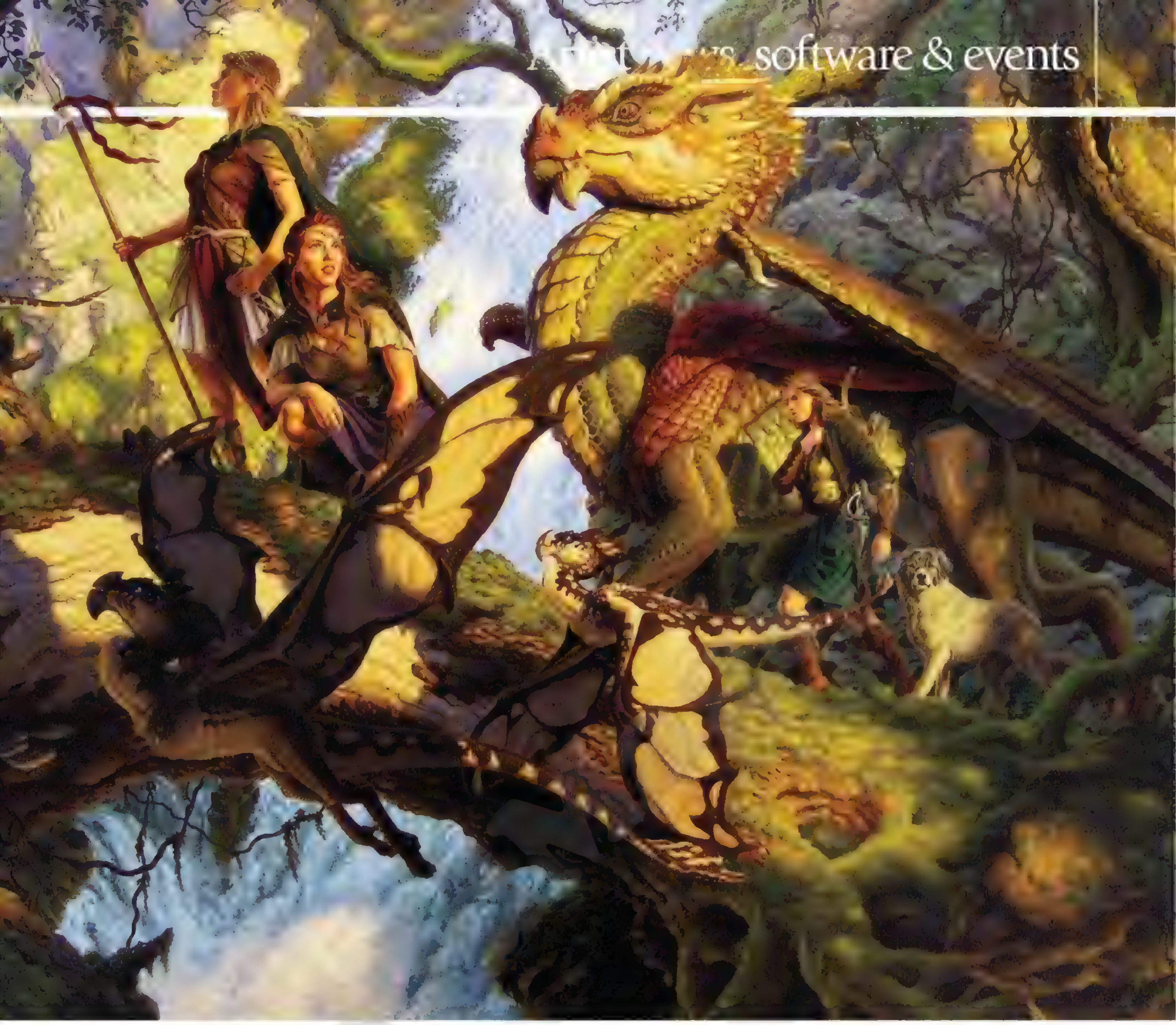
The book also features insight from many luminaries in the art entertainment industries, including Mike Mignola, Chris Sanders and Michael Kutsche.

The paperback is available to buy at **www.theperfectbait.com** (with a free listen to the audiobook if you promote it on Facebook). Or you can buy the audiobook version for $9.99 at **www.schoolism.com**.



EXCLUSIVE AUDIO SAMPLE ON YOUR DVD!

The artist sent us this unpublished image – thanks Bobby!



Scouts was painted by Raoul Vitale, a self-taught artist. See more of his work at **www.raoulvitaleart.com**.

A dream becomes reality

Magic realism Driven by a love of all things fantasy and sci-fi, this artist has funded, designed and published his first digital art book

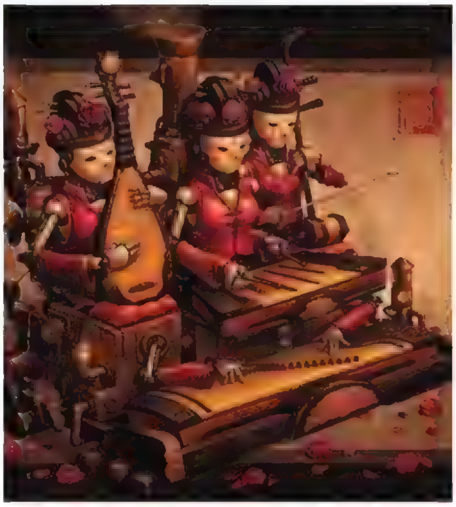
Craig Musselman is a digital art fan, in the fullest sense of the term. Running a number of websites dedicated to his love of fantasy and sci-fi art, he's a passionate photo manipulator, artist and self-confessed steampunk geek. He's also just self-published a new book of international fantasy and SF art called Machines and Magic, on sale now.

This isn't his first foray into publishing. "In 2010 I funded, edited, designed and published Talent Next Door, showcasing Canadian artists," he says. That turned out to be Craig's dry run for this year's Machines and Magic release. "This time the book was international, honing in on my passion: fantasy and sci-fi art."

Craig used his online contacts to get the ball rolling. "I had a small group of friends with extensive libraries of art to start with," he says. "Early 2011 I set up MachinesandMagic.com to recruit artists, and began to scour the internet for artist galleries that I liked."

Craig soon became deft at finding great artists through the web, Google-translating the many non-English speaking artists, and tracking anonymous images back to their authors using online image-recognising sites. Then he arranged a judging panel just before the publishing deadline. "Having been flooded with work I chose Ona Loots (South Africa), Angela Tygerson Ross (US), Mark Rehkopf (Canada), and Joël Larose (Canada) as my panel," he says, "and dropped them several hundred images into a judge's inbox, with a one-line email: 'just pick five of them – by tomorrow if you can.'"

Have a look at Craig's site to see how it all panned out: **www.machinesandmagic.com**.

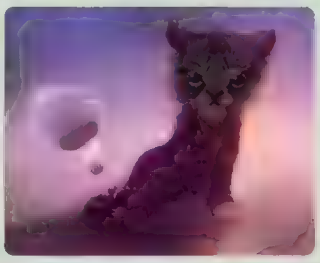


James Ng (**www.jamesngart.com**) combined pencil and charcoal with Painter and Photoshop for Court Band.

deviantART

+deviantWATCH

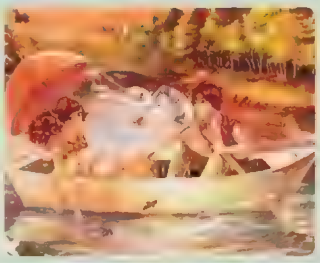
Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART…



Apofiss

www.apofiss.deviantart.com

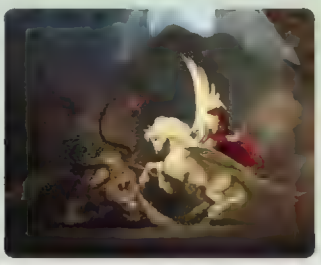
By limiting his colour palette and subject matter, Apofiss has created one of the most recognisable deviantART sites out there. And the chosen subjects? Kittens! Sure, there are a few tiger cubs, a fox and an owl, but the bread and butter of his popular site is cute li' kitties.



Alex Tuan

www.alex-tuan.deviantart.com

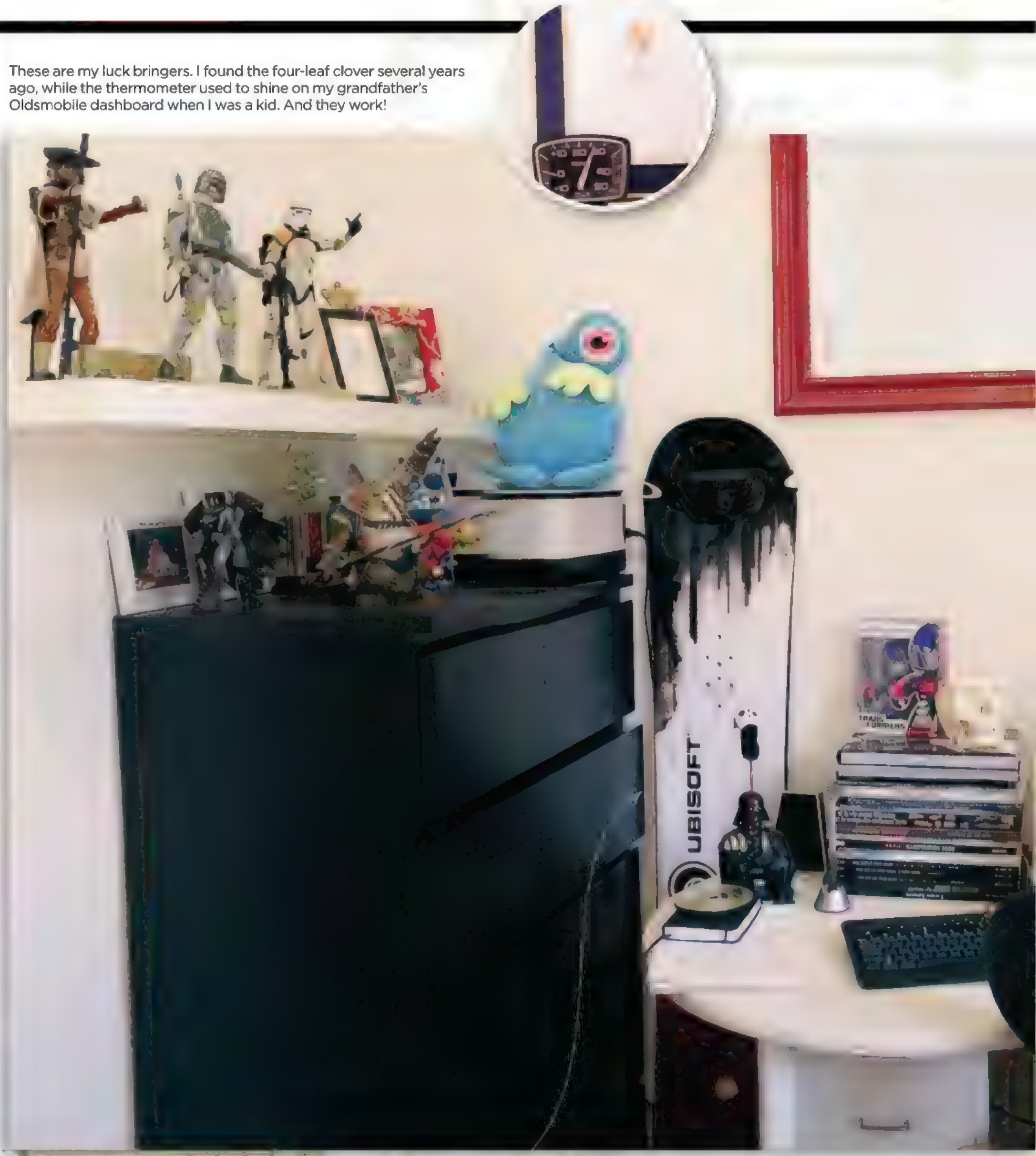
Alex is a talented artist with a number of styles at his disposal. His deviantART site is split into sections such as Books, Concepts and Commissions, and it's his Poster folder that holds most of his lush panoramic paintings, which are rich in colour and colourful characters.



Marc Camelbeke

www.thebeke.deviantart.com

Although Marc's day job is a 3D designer, he likes to explore 2D traditional and digital art in his spare time. Most of these images are WIPs and one-hour sketches, and with his great grasp of anatomy and infusing his subjects with strong character, they're also fascinating studies.



These are my luck bringers. I found the four-leaf clover several years ago, while the thermometer used to shine on my grandfather's Oldsmobile dashboard when I was a kid. And they work!

I may have to wait until next winter to try out this nice snowboard that a friend at Ubisoft gave me.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Remko Troost

Making worlds Riding the waves of his own inspiration, Remko Troost has made a cosy workspace in his Montreal apartment

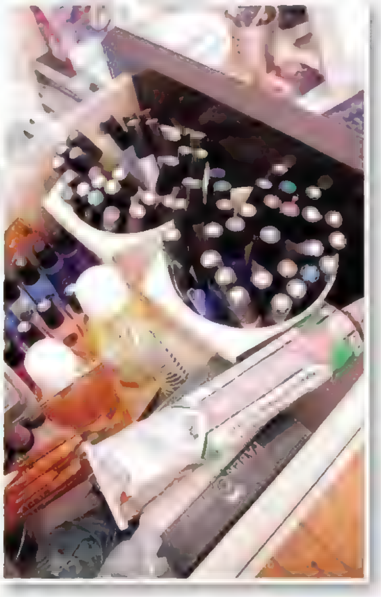
When I settled in Montreal, not so long ago, I moved to the Plateau Mont-Royal area, which is one of the loveliest neighbourhoods around here. The space in the houses is often limited, however, so you have to be really creative in how to manage your space. That's why my little desk is in our bedroom right beside my bed!

I like my cute little drawing hole and it has an advantage – when I'm really tired after a long night on some crazy deadline, I don't even have to touch the floor to get into bed.

I'm a fanatic art book and toy/collectibles collector – just like many other artists, no doubt – and I like to have them around while I work. They inspire me a lot and keep the child inside me dreaming. Unfortunately, I can't fit all of them around my desk and so

Here's the so-called unbeatable Superman. He's only got one leg because my two daughters kicked his ass all over the place!

PEZ rules! I'm a big fan of the Marvel universe, and this very old Wolverine PEZ has followed me all over the world for almost 15 years now. I guess the sweets inside can be used as bullets now.



Under my collectibles and just above my socks are my traditional tools. I regularly use them for research or when I'm doodling around on my balcony in the summer.

I'm constantly have to change who – or what – gets the prime spot. I create different universes with them, depending on my state of mind or the work that I'm busy with. I don't need much of a reason to give them new poses and play around with them from time to time.

I'm also a big fan of nature, mythologies, and history books and magazines. They're another great source of inspiration and come in very useful when it comes to looking up armour, various environments or a specific animal, for example.

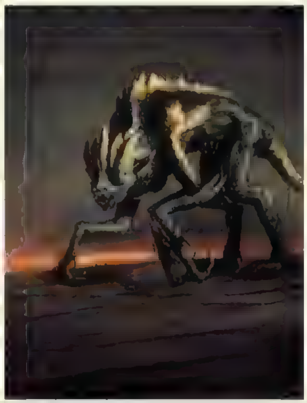
I usually start the day with a lot of coffee and cigarettes (that reminds me, I should quit smoking... again), while lazily creating playlists that'll fit whatever world it is that I'm about to create art for. Music plays a big role in my work. It gives me energy and enables me to be in charge of my own waves of inspiration – waves that I can keep riding until the end of my working day.

Remko paints for the game and film industries. See more of his art at www.remkotroost.com.

I inherited these books a long time ago – they're worth their weight in gold! They're full of detailed descriptions of armour, ranging from the time of the Pharaohs right up to modern-day soldiers.

In short...

The latest news in brief for digital artists



Creature **On the brain**

Nicholas Cloister is a digital artist with a passion for creature design. So much so that his RPG Creatures website is dedicated to them, and features regular beastly design updates. He's also just released a book of his creatures. You can see more of Nicholas's art here: **www.bit.ly/rpg-creat**.

Inspire **Tablet art**

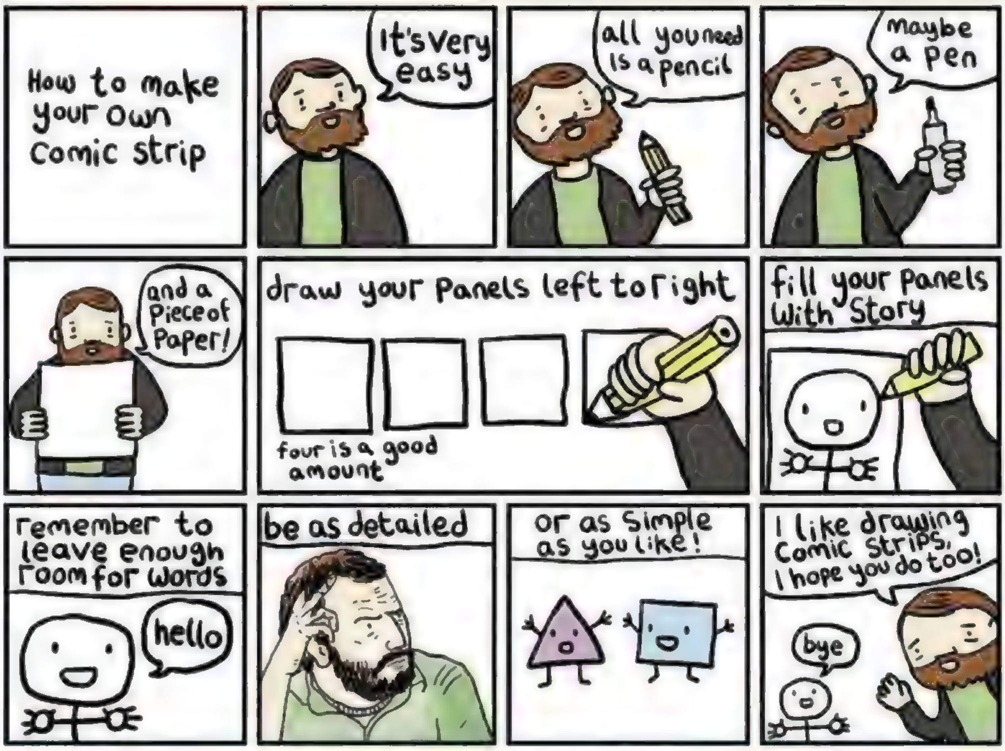
KiwiPixel has released a new iPad art app, Inspire Pro. For digital artists who want to get back to the look and feel of oil paint on canvas, its five brushes should keep you occupied, for the entry price of £5.49. More details at **www.kiwipixel.com**.

Old dog **New site**

We're always looking for new reasons to eye the inspiring art of James Gurney and he's given us another, by redesigning his website. Same great art and artist updates on a shiny new site! Have a look: **www.jamesgurney.com**.

Life is Humiliation

by Matt Boyce


How to make your own comic strip
It's very easy
all you need is a pencil
maybe a pen
and a piece of paper!
draw your panels left to right
four is a good amount
fill your panels with story
remember to leave enough room for words
hello
be as detailed
or as simple as you like!
I like drawing comic strips, I hope you do too!
bye

Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable

"Putty erasers are your best friends... you can model them into wee critters when bored. I make pretty decent mushrooms and snails."

So the secret to great art is turning rubbers into snails, according to illustrator John Howe... See page 94

Face of beauty

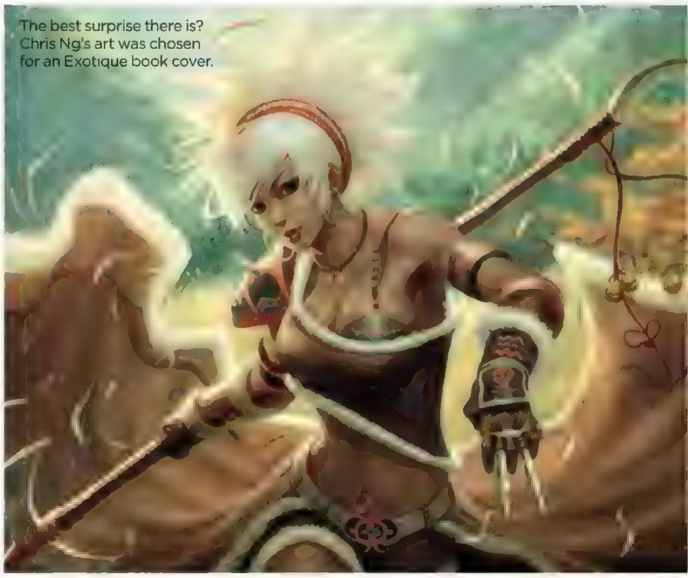
Cover it It was two in the morning when Chris Ng found out his image was the new face of Ballistic's Exotique 7 art book…

There are many great things about Ballistic Publishing's Exotique and Exposé digital art book series. One is that the cover art – an image that quickly becomes synonymous with the very best in the business – is not commissioned, but chosen from the many paintings sent in.

That means we're as likely to see an image from an industry legend as from a new artist – an artist like Chris Ng. "When I heard I was excited and surprised that I'd been selected to stand alongside all those great artists," he says.

Originally painted for trading card games company Strategy Entertainment Pte Ltd, Chris created the image at Imaginary Friends Studios (IFS). "I owe a lot to IFS. Without its support I wouldn't have created the image," he says.

You can check out more of Chris's art here: **www.chrisnfy85.deviantart.com**.



The best surprise there is? Chris Ng's art was chosen for an Exotique book cover.

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ImagineFX Forum Winners

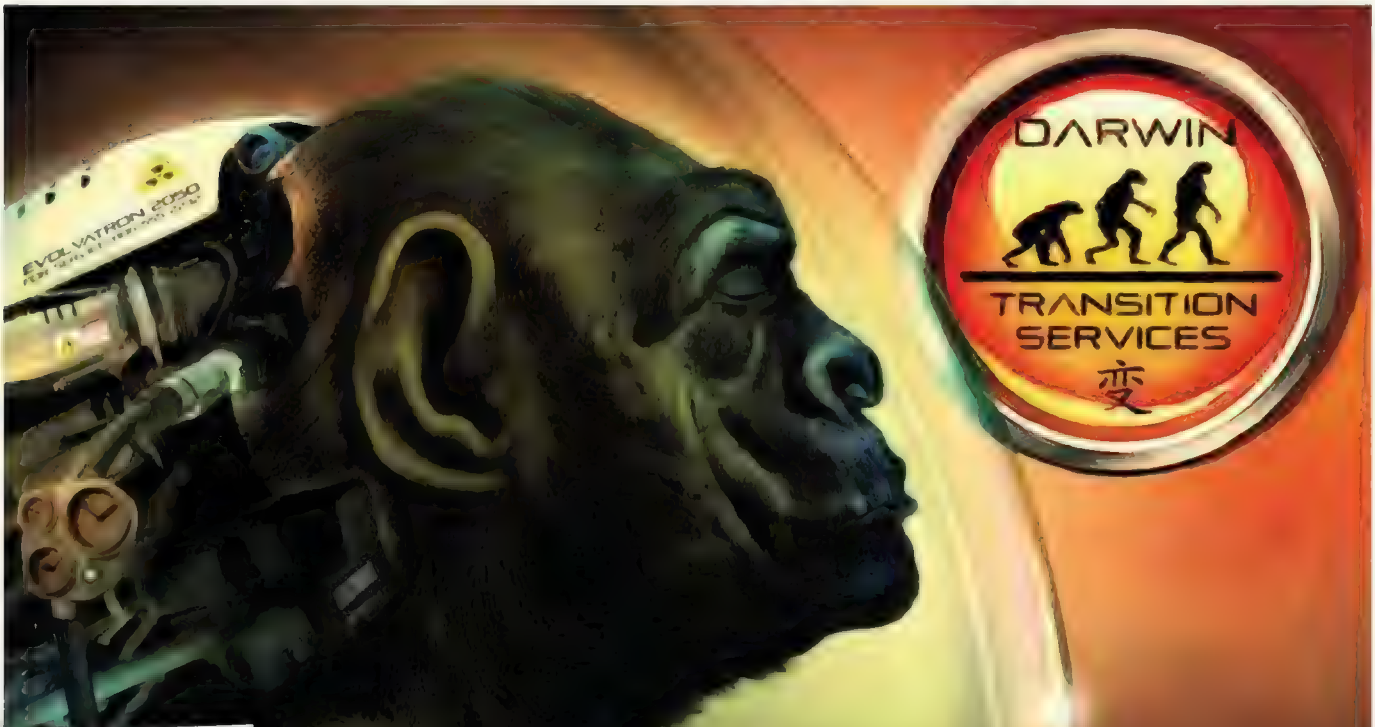
Image of the month

Artistic evolution Inspired by classic sci-fi literature and the pressure of a change of artistic direction, Antonio's image is this month's deserved overall winner

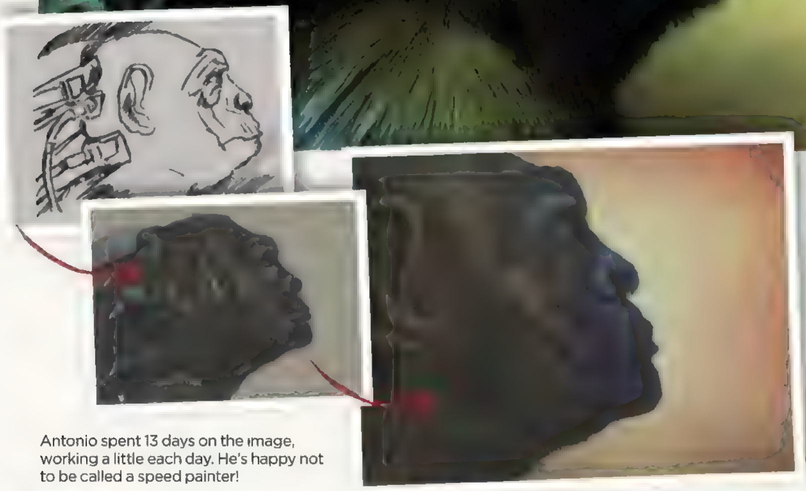
You'd think the monthly MYFX challenges would be so much easier to work on than the weeklies. After all, there's bags of time to perfect your piece. For Antonio Fernandez, though, changing the concept of his piece half-way through did away with this presumption.

A chemist by day, Antonio usually has a few concepts bouncing around before starting the monthly challenges. "Then I'll see a photo in a magazine or something on TV, which solidifies the direction that I want to take," he says. "However, I've developed a rather disturbing tendency to change my mind in the middle of the challenge month."

[illegible] **Forced Evolution**
[illegible] **Antonio Fernandez (HansNomad)**
GALLERY: **www.imaginefx.com/hansnomad**



The classic sci-fi novel The Island of Doctor Moreau gave Antonio the inspiration he needed for this painting. It's one of his favourite books.

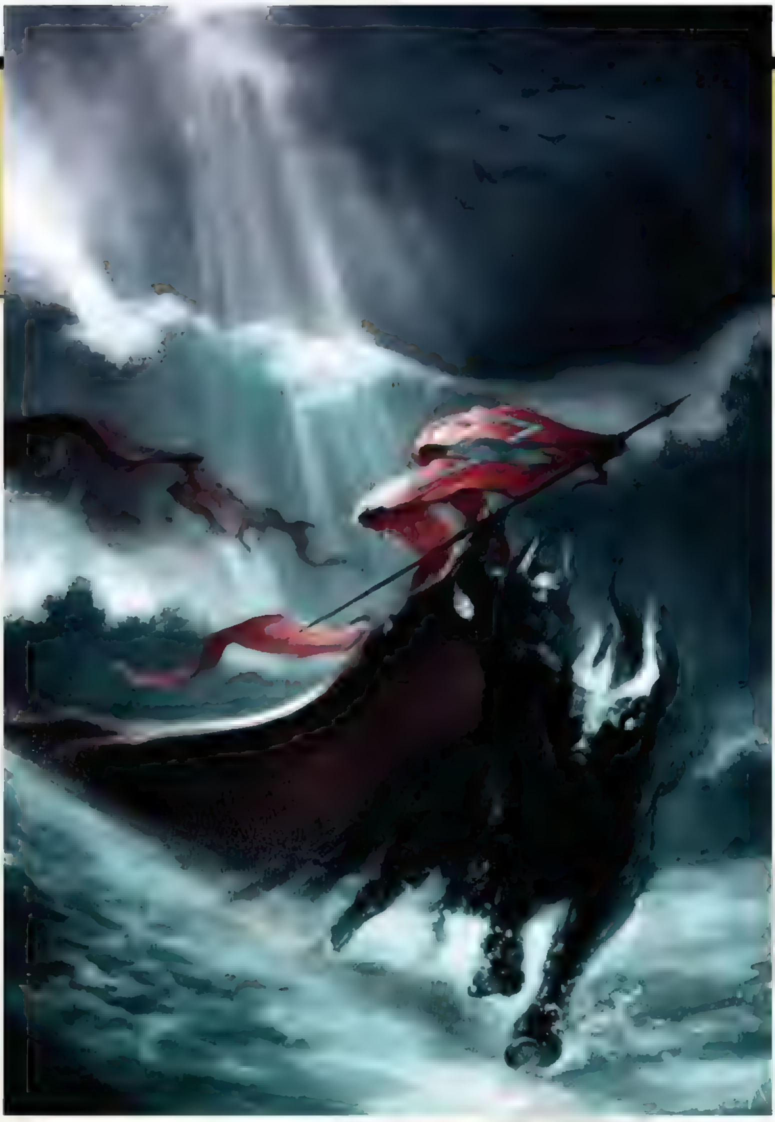


Antonio spent 13 days on the image, working a little each day. He's happy not to be called a speed painter!

[illegible]

"I like this a lot. Loving the Darwin references as well as what seems to be a combination of Portal-style technology and Planet of the Apes imagery. It works well. If I have one gripe it's the sign on the far right; the orange and reds could've done with a slight tweak, but otherwise this is brilliant!"

[illegible]

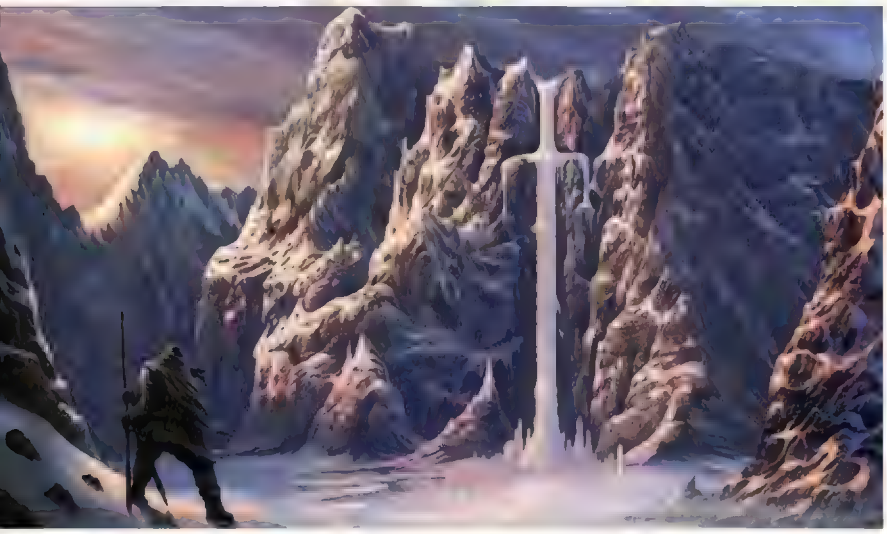


5th Horseman of Apocalypse
Lucie Hendrychová (Hendryx)
www.imaginefx.com/Hendryx

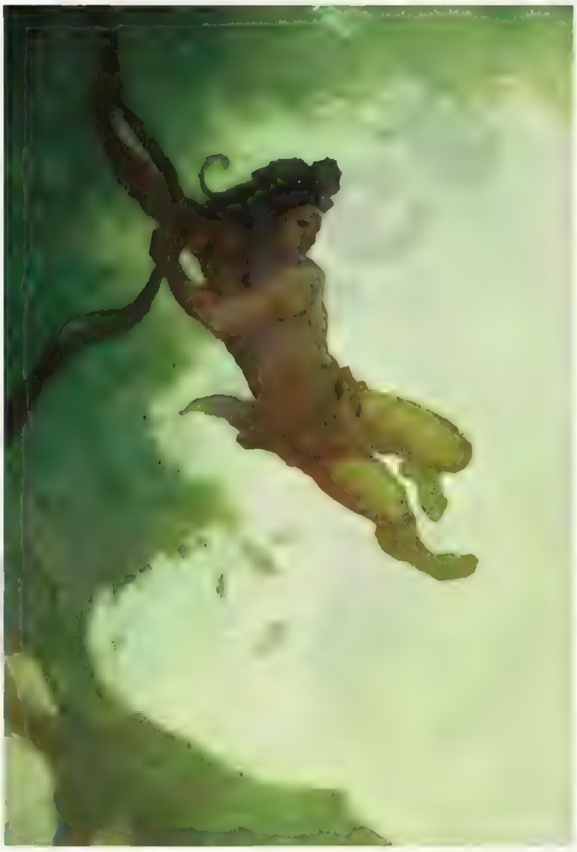
"I created this image to test my speed-painting skills. I had an idea and soon found myself enjoying the flow of creativity while the pen whizzed around on the tablet. Thanks to the MYFX challenges and all the folks on the forum for the inspiration."

Sword of Ice
Vince Hewitt (midscrawl)
www.imaginefx.com/midscrawl

"I joined the IFX challenge because after two years of reading the magazine and trying out the workshops, I had very few pieces of finished work. I figured that being given a subject and a deadline may help me in that regard, and it has!"

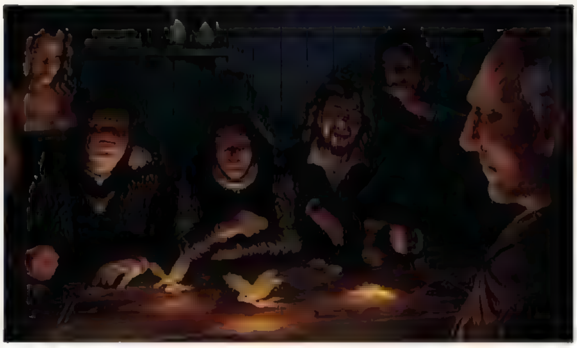


Join in!
www.imaginefx.com/myfx



Tarzan – The Return
Dave Brasgalla
www.imaginefx.com/dave_brasgalla

"I was nervous about having to follow St. John, Frazetta, Jones and others, but Tarzan is such a compelling character that I had to try. I hoped to capture the feeling that, in a sense, Tarzan can fly. I painted the monkey clinging to his head on a whim, and then fell in love with it."



The Race
Vince Hewitt (midscrawl)
www.imaginefx.com/midscrawl

"Sometimes thumbnails do the job, but this time I was getting nothing. I decided to walk away and stop thinking about the challenge, and the next day this image appeared almost fully formed in my head. I just wish that happened all the time!"

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

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Exploring Skyrim

In response to your request on Facebook to send in any questions/comments requests, here I go! First of all, kudos on the current mag! Especially the cover art, which is stunning! I brought it in to my college course, which is mainly traditional art, but it caught everyone's eye and some people are asking about working digitally and of course I sent them to Easons the booksellers to buy the magazine!

Now, for a future issue I would love to see a piece on the art of Skyrim. I can't be the only one who's dividing their time between a Wacom tablet and this fantastic game! Unfortunately, I can't afford the Collector's Edition of Skyrim, but I'm hoping the art book will come out separately soon. But to bridge the gap, an article by ImagineFX would be awesome!

Keep up the good work!

Linda McNamara, via email

Claire replies Ah, Skyrim. The game that has robbed parents of their sons and daughters and husband and wives of their partners! An art of… feature is certainly something we want to do. I'm on the phone to Bethesda as I type this, so watch this space.

Colour blindness – two readers respond

Although August is colour blind, [Letters, issue 77] there's no reason why it should stop him from painting. Many artists have a problem with mixing greens and about eight per cent of men and 0.5 per cent of women are colour blind.

Use coloured filters to detect red from green. Look through a red filter and the greens become darker and the reds lighter. Look through a green filter and the reds become darker and the greens lighter. (Try a thin layer of acrylic on a clear plastic sheet to make filters.) The main thing is, if you can't draw a straight line freehand you use a ruler! You're no less an artist.

David Sansom, Warburton

I just started reading the latest issue of ImagineFX. On the letters page an artist revealed that he was struggling with colour blindness and asked if other artists could relate. Well, Anne Pogoda is colour blind. She can't see Magenta. So, when she receives a commission with that colour, she has to ask friends, "Umm... does this apple look right to you?" Must be frustrating.

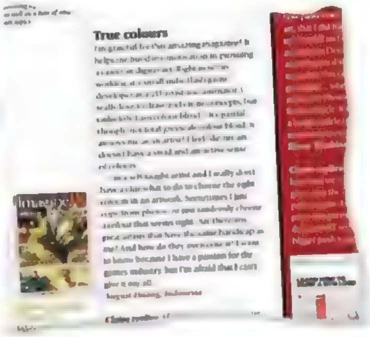
By the way, any chance of a tutorial from her? Another tutorial from Benita Winckler would be sweet too. Just thought I'd ask while I have your attention.

Julia Fahrentholz, via email

Claire replies Hello both. Thanks for your tips on helping colour-blind artists and suggestions for future artists – they're always welcome!

DID YOU MISS ISSUE 78?

We've still got a few copies left, but you need to move fast! See page 51 for details on how to get hold of one.



When August lamented his partial colour blindness, other readers jumped in with words of support.

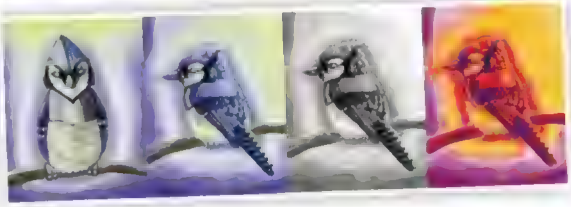
Motoring along

I can't believe I'm almost half-way through my senior year already! I want to thank ImagineFX again for fuelling my fascination for digital art and helping me improve my techniques. I found this issue's vehicle-making articles interesting and relevant to my work, since I integrate mechanics with animals and blur the boundary between science and imagination. Right now I'm preparing online portfolios for Carnegie Mellon and the University of Southern California, and deadlines are looming over the horizon… I've got my fingers crossed! Here is one of my pieces, which sold at a print show for $300.

Allison Thai, via email

Claire replies Allison, you're welcome. Glad to hear that our vehicle design issue went down well. Good luck with your studies – although if you're already selling your work, you might not need it!

Allison's art skills are good enough to earn her some money – this piece sold for $300.



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That little push

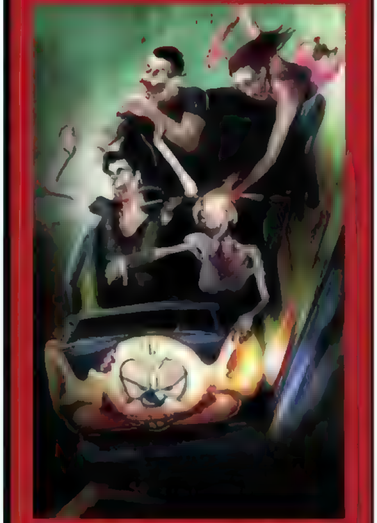
I wanted to send you a brief note to thank you for a little bit of encouragement you just gave me. I was having one of those moments of doubt we creatives all have from time to time when I opened issue 77 and read your introduction. It was just one of those fantastic little moments I needed to give me a little push.

I was a staff illustrator for five years with a small magazine in the US and that contract ended in 2009. Since then I've been surviving mostly on freelance photography. All the while I've been completely inspired by your magazine. Each time I read your fantastic publication I want to get back to my illustration roots.

Oh, I'm sure you're insanely busy but if you want to see my work it can be found at **www.ryandoan.com**.

Ryan Doan, via email

Claire replies Ryan, thanks for writing in. It's good to hear that I helped you, because that was the plan. When we're creating it's always so easy to think about the stuff that we can't do, rather than how far we've progressed (no matter how small). Good luck with your illustration work.



Who says the living should have all the fun? Ryan created this in Photoshop and Painter.

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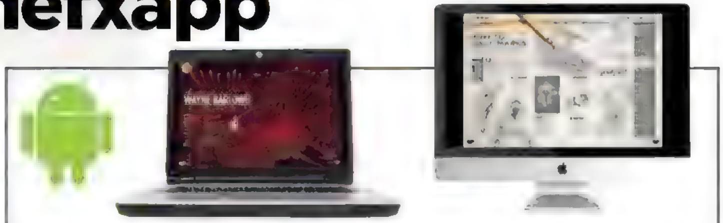

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Jonny Duddle, freelance artist

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Artist Q&A

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The ImagineFX panel

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

Lauren K Cannon

Lauren is a freelance fantasy artist who specialises in the surreal. She lives in a small woodland village in New Jersey, US.

www.navate.com

Saejin Oh

Saejin is a freelance illustrator living in South Korea who works for Udon. He loves creating concept art and character designs.

www.saejinoh.blogspot.com

Bill Corbett

Bill works as a freelance artist producing illustrations for media groups, public relations companies, small businesses, bands and private clients.

www.billcorbett.co.uk

Jim Pavelec

Jim's surrounded by demons, monsters, and devils. His new book, Hymns & Wretched Offerings to the Golden Ones, is an exploration of this world.

www.jimpavelec.com

Cynthia Sheppard

Cynthia is a freelance digital artist. With a background in traditional painting, she likes to bring classical techniques to her work on digital canvas.

www.sheppard-arts.com

Nick Harris

Gloucestershire-based Nick went digital in 2000 after 18 years' working with traditional methods. He works mainly on children's illustrations.

www.nickillus.co.uk

Kev Crossley

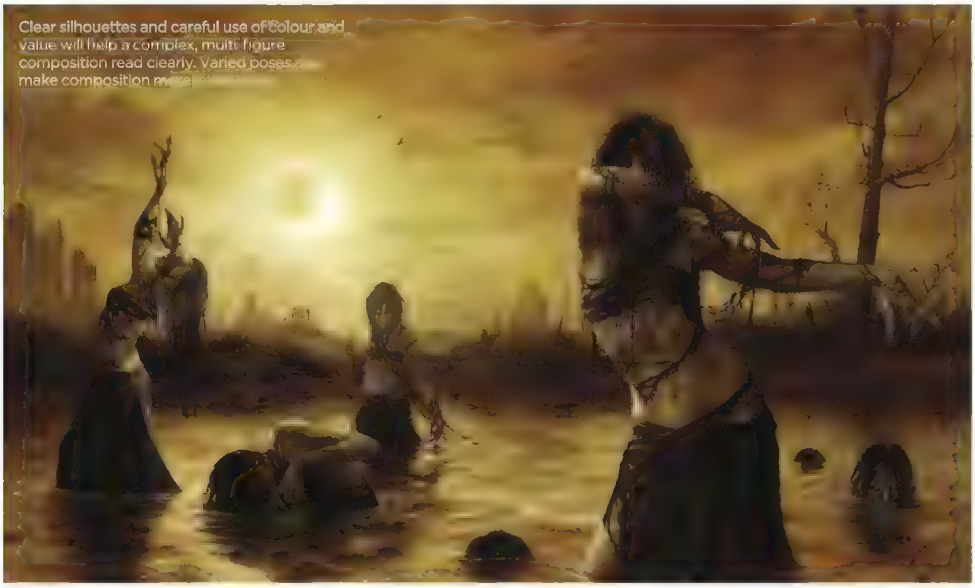
Kev is an experienced concept artist, providing unique character designs, storyboards and environment art for the games industry.

www.kevcrossley.com

Question

How should I compose a group of moving figures?

Laura Kirby, England



Clear silhouettes and careful use of colour and value will help a complex, multi-figure composition read clearly. Varied poses a[illegible] make composition more [illegible]

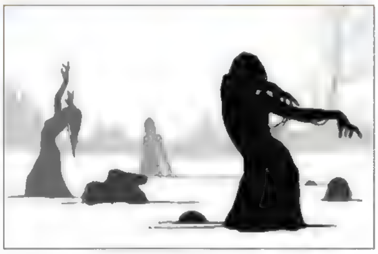
Answer

Lauren replies

Composing multiple figures is always difficult, but painting them in motion makes the problem even harder. One important thing to watch out for with a moving group is tangents. A tangent is where two edges or lines intersect or touch. In art, tangents can create visual confusion or disrupt a composition's flow by preventing the edges of two objects from being read clearly. They also happen when a line seems to meld into another object, such as the outline or a mountain peak connecting directly with the angle of a figure's arm. You should always try to avoid tangents – and with multiple figures it becomes especially vital.

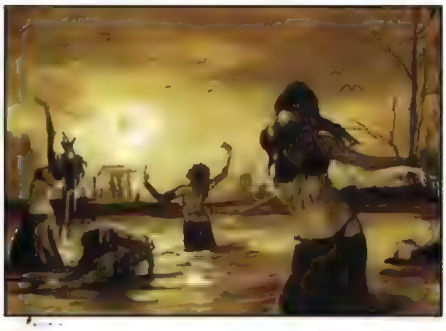
In this case we have a group of dancers. Each character needs to have a clean silhouette; their poses should be easily readable. Stagger the placement of the figures, but don't space them evenly apart or put them all on the same plane. Groups look artificial unless you vary their size and placement. Think about background, mid-ground and foreground, and also remember to create overlapping shapes. Have some figures in the front obscure parts of the figures in the back. This trick is a huge help in creating believable dimensions. To prevent the figures from jumbling together, use value and colour contrast to keep them visually individual.

There's a lot to keep in mind when doing multiple figure compositions, so I suggest making a lot of thumbnail sketches before you commit to anything. Find the best poses and placements for each figure: planning ahead is the best way to avoid the pitfalls of composition.

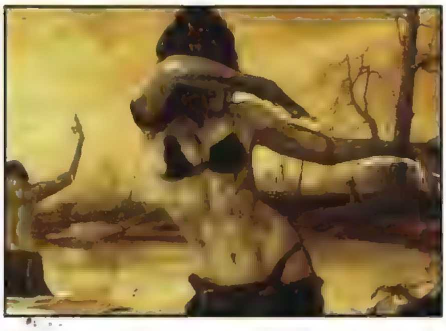


An easy way to see how values and silhouettes are working in an image is to create a quick, flat greyscale study.

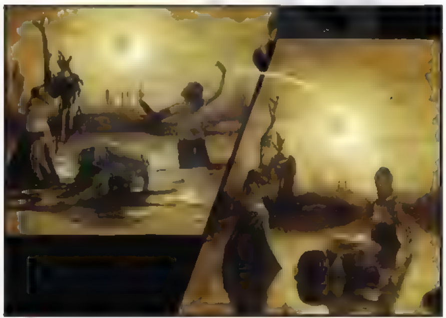
Step-by-step: Make your multiple figures work together



1 Before committing to any details I plan out the rough gestures of each character. This gives a feel for the composition and helps me address any issues. I lay out my basic colours and values, but that's all. Keeping the figures on a separate layer enables me to move and scale them easily, if necessary.



2 Multiple figure compositions need a focus, so pick one or two characters that need the most attention. I start refining the bodies of the girls, getting their gesture correct. I also focus on the lighting and values. This approach makes it easier to discern how to push the other figures back so the image doesn't become jumbled.

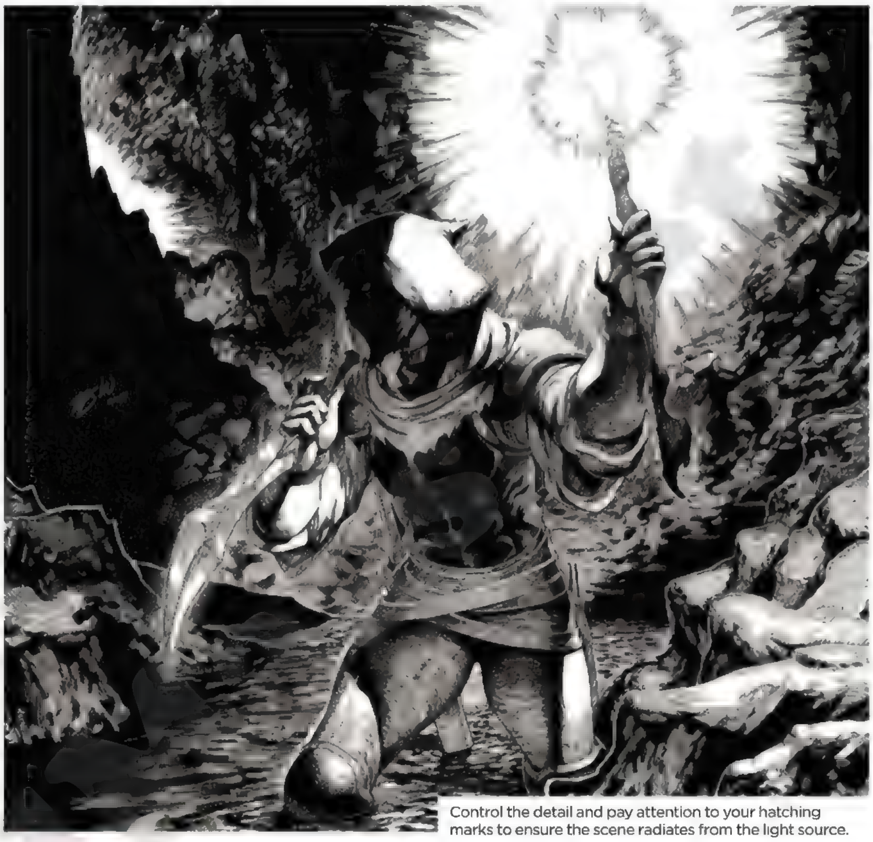


2 I realise the girl at the back isn't working out. Her pose is awkward and creates ugly tangents with the landscape. So I repaint her, facing the viewer, with her arms down to add variety to the poses. I use layers with low-opacity lighting effects, to create strong atmospheric depth between the figures.

Question

How do I make things appear to be glowing, in a comic book style?

Larson James, US



Control the detail and pay attention to your hatching marks to ensure the scene radiates from the light source.

Answer

Saejin replies

Drawing something in a comic book style usually means working with limited resources. Comic books are narrative driven, so the story must progress with the reader's pace. This often means you're required to express your art in a quick and efficient way, usually doing away with complex painting techniques, or colour altogether, to conserve time.

Expressing a glowing object in a comic book style generally means visualising the impossible. Comic books often render motion, time and even the invisible elements as visible, to present a story. This is necessary because a comic book is a motionless medium, unlike animation or film. The only way to show something is happening is by drawing something out of nothing. For instance, a puff of air out of a character's mouth, or an intense radiating line surrounding a character in great shock, or in this case, a radiating light emitting from a glowing light source.

To make something seem as if it's glowing, make sure you don't detail the object itself. Any amount of added detail often breaks the illusion of the glow when there are only black lines on a white canvas to distinguish between what's dark or light. Just the faint suggestions to the object's outline will suffice. In addition, while hatching radiating lines, make sure you don't draw the radiating lines all the way to the light source. The closer the hatchings are to the light source, the lighter it becomes, eventually disappearing completely. You can aid your hatching process by using the Rotate View Tool in Photoshop to achieve the comfortable angle for your hatching.

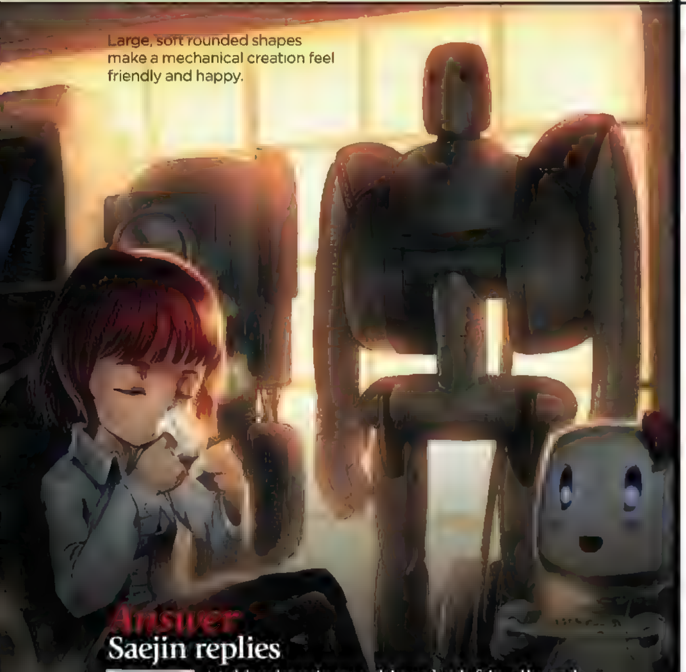
Once you've drawn all 360-degree angles of radiating lines, when they're combined with the rest of the background the illusion of the glow will be realised.

Artist's secret

SAVE YOUR HATCHED LINES

if you're drawing detailed line art, you can draw those lines over and over thousands of times to do the shading you've been doing for hours, or you can do them on a separate file, and just paste them when you need them

Question
How can I make robots look friendly and non-threatening?
Kit Henderson, US



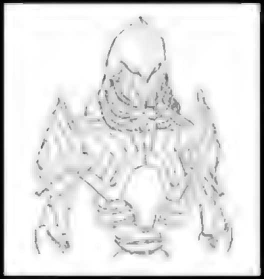
Large, soft rounded shapes make a mechanical creation feel friendly and happy.

Answer
Saejin replies

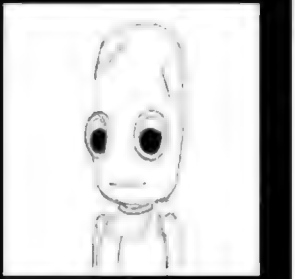
Making inanimate objects look friendly and non-threatening is pretty straightforward. You need to be aware of a few key design elements but beyond that, there's no real limit to what you can come up with.

To understand why designs have a particular appearance, we look to ourselves for the answer. The very definition of threatening vs friendly is based on our perspective and how humans see the world. Humans instinctively identify friend and foe. We draw those instincts from our natural enemies such as predators and environmental dangers. The closer we are to objects that can kill us or harm us, the more intimidated we feel. In contrast, those objects that require our constant protection, such as babies, children and puppies look completely non-threatening.

Something that looks sharp, is made up of steep angles, and has small eyes in a small head and a large and bulky body will feel as intimidating as something that can challenge us physically and do great harm. The opposite, of course, is something with child-like features, a soft, round design with large eyes, large head and a small body. Such design looks harmless because they lack natural weapons and are vulnerable to physical trauma. The ability to express emotion will further strengthen its ability to look friendly.

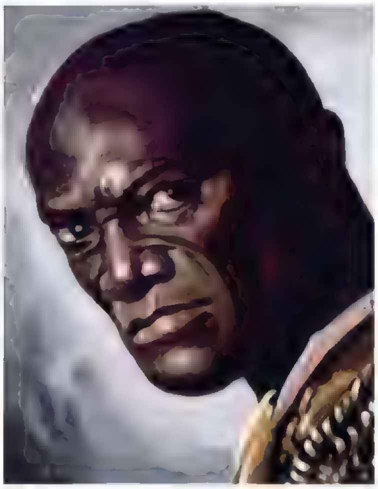


A sharp, angled design with a small head and large body combined with complex mechanisms makes a robot look aggressive, threatening and non-human.

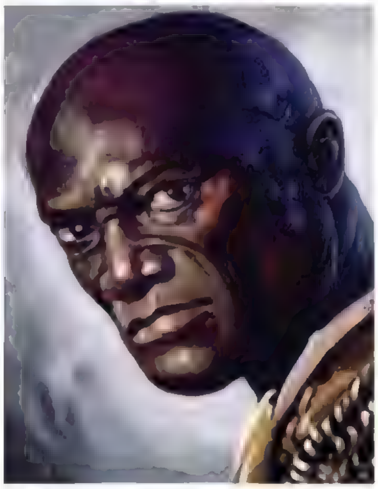


A smooth design with a large head and small body that features a device to express emotions such as eyelids helps to anthropomorphise inanimate objects.

Question
How do I paint multiple light sources on either side of a face?
Élise Morel, France



This portrait painting features a single main light source coming from the left. It illuminates the face and leaves the back of the head in the shade.



A secondary light source is added to the right. Because it's weaker than the primary light source, it only illuminates the shaded parts of the head.

Answer
Kev replies

In 3D environments, light is continually bouncing around, reflected from object to object. In turn, this reflected light can illuminate objects that might ordinarily be expected to be in shadow. Reflected light thus behaves like a secondary light source, and in painting or photography it can help to create a greater depth of dramatic, three-dimensional space within what will usually be a 2D image.

I've painted a portrait of a character from a television programme to illustrate how easily you can create depth by adding some reflected/secondary light. The first image is lit by a single light source, resulting in one side of the head being illuminated, with one side in shadow.

I then paint a little blue-ish hue into the shadowed side of the head. This could either be the ambient, reflected light of a darkening sky or light reflected from a nearby wall. As a result the light is soft and painted in a subtle range of tones to add depth and detail to the shadowed areas of the character.

Question
How do I paint decaying, old flowers and make them look authentic?
Hugh Headland, Scotland

Answer
Bill replies

There are a lot of factors to consider in the stages of decay for a flower, and it's a good idea to think them through before starting the painting process. When a flower starts to decay the vibrant colour of the petals begins to fade, the surrounding leaves lose their lustre and the whole plant has an almost washed-out hue about it. The more advanced the decay process, the darker and more washed out the petals will actually become.

After a short time the plant starts to lose rigidity as the moisture content is reduced. The stem struggles to hold up the flower and the petals fold over and curl up on themselves. When painting it's important to remember not just the wilting and folding that's on display, but the pull of gravity, too.

As more petals fall away from the flower the inner part of the flower at the top of the stem becomes exposed, and depending on the flower type a cluster of tiny seeds will be visible. Keeping that in mind when constructing the flowers will make the painting a lot easier. Google "decaying flowers" for photographic examples.

Question

What's the easiest way to fix colours that don't feel right once a painting's finished?

Miles Beeson, US

Answer

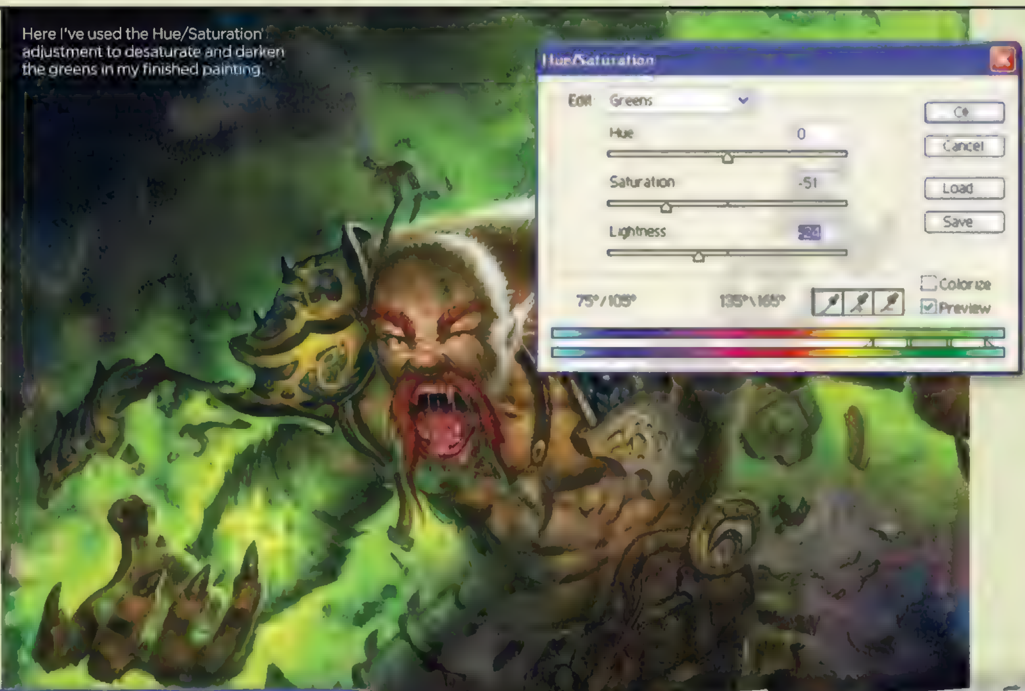
Jim replies

There are many ways to fix the colours in your piece once it's otherwise complete. I'll describe the two ways I like to tackle this problem.

Using Photoshop, I select a portion of the image with the Lasso tool, or select the entire image, depending on your particular situation and go to Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation. A box will pop up that'll enable you to adjust the hue, saturation and brightness of all of the colours, or specific selected colours, within your selection.

Another approach has the advantage of giving you a variety of options that you can see all at once. Make your selection again and this time go to Image>Adjustments>Variations. This opens up a box with many alternative versions of your image. It'll show you what your image looks like if you choose to make it more yellow, more green, or whatever colour you like.

You can also limit the colour change to either just the highlights or just the shadow areas. This is a simple but surprisingly versatile tool for changing the colours in your piece.



Here I've used the Hue/Saturation adjustment to desaturate and darken the greens in my finished painting.

Hue/Saturation

Edit: Greens

Hue: 0

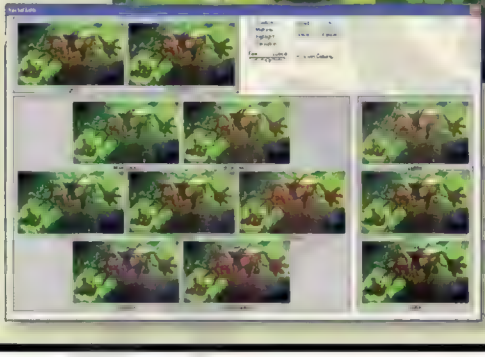
Saturation: -51

Lightness: -24

75°/105° 135°\165°

☐ Colorize

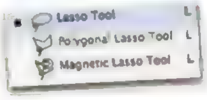
☑ Preview



This shows what the Variations tool looks like when opened. You can see the wide variety of options for changing your colours with a single click.

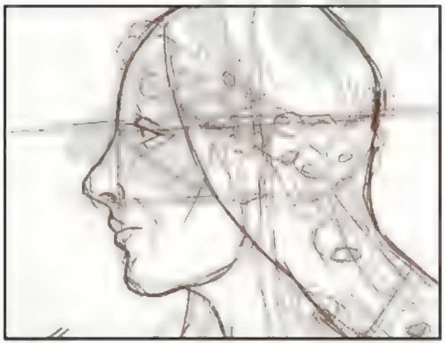
Artist's secret

THE LASSO TOOL

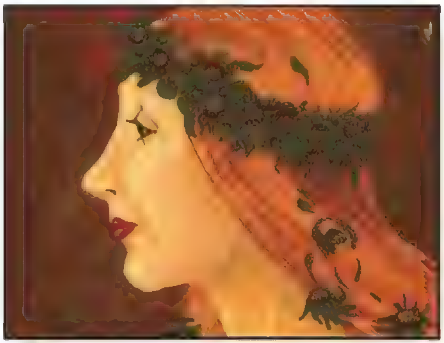


When using the Lasso tool to select an area to alter in a finished piece, set the feather fairly high – around 30-50 pixels – so that your corrections don't form hard-edged separations

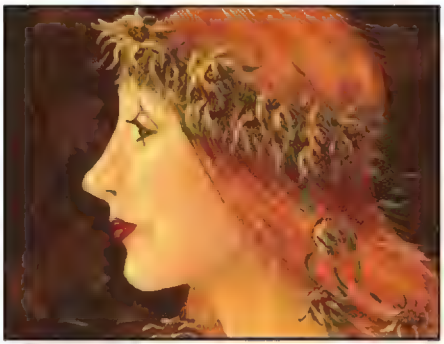
Step-by-step: Show a flower wilting and drying



① In ArtRage Pro I draw out the barebones of the head I'll paint wearing a garland of old, dried flowers. I roughly sketch the flower by using a circle and a smaller circle inside to indicate the flower's centre. I duplicate the drawing to keep a draft on top while I paint the other.



② Once I finish painting the girl's head I start the flowers by painting out the leaves in a darkish olive green. I then paint in the central areas of the flowers in a dark sienna and use the Paint Tube tool to create the tiny seeds at the core of the flower. I just dot them in randomly.

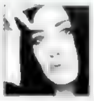


③ I now add the petals as limp, straggled strokes, bending and folding where appropriate while keeping the colour muted. I highlight the petals that catch more light, keeping the strokes loose. Finally I add the garland shadow and finish of the background details.

Question
What's the best way to combine human and animal characteristics?

Jo Copping, England

Answer
Cynthia replies



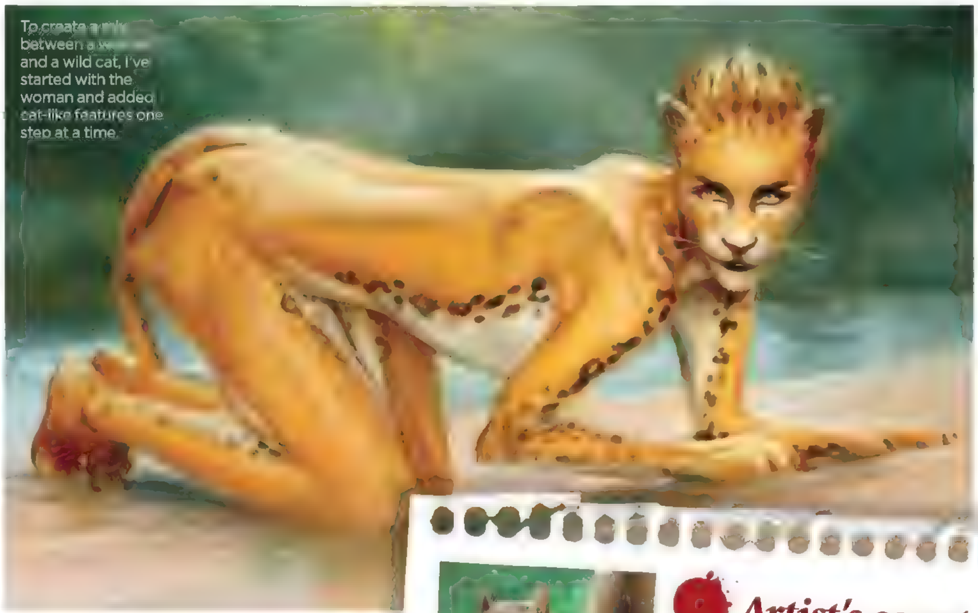
Depending on the specific mix that you want to achieve, you can create a creature that has animal and human traits in one of two ways.

The first way is to paint an animal as usual, then add human gestures and expressions. Assigning human qualities to non-human creatures, objects or concepts is called anthropomorphism, and has been used throughout history as a literary device. Most anthropomorphic creatures in fables, for example, begin by referencing an animal form before adding one or two visual human characteristics, such as human eyes, hands, or stance and posture.

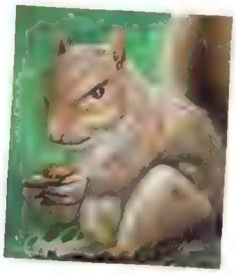
The second way to achieve a mixed creature is by starting with a human form and adding animal characteristics, as shown in my example here.

The key when mixing human and animal anatomy in either method is to start with the skeleton, and find bone structures that are similar between the human and creature of your choice. Start with the spine and make a decision whether to keep the human or animal spine intact in your finished creature. Then move on to the hips and pelvis, the rib cage, then the limbs and so on.

In the finished example seen above, I've kept the human skeleton mostly intact, but introduced subtle variations for a higher and more rounded cat-like scapula (shoulder blades), tailbone and hips.



To create a mix between a woman and a wild cat, I've started with the woman and added cat-like features one step at a time.

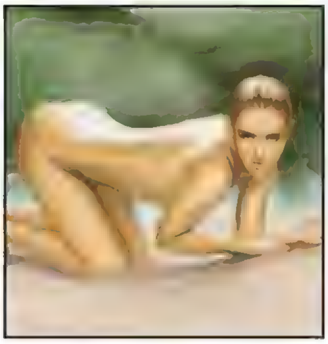


Artist's secret

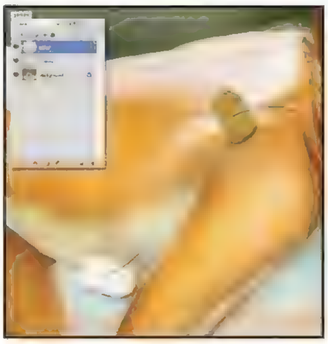
ALL IN THE EYES

Painting human-looking eyes and eye expressions will let the audience know the creature is capable of human intelligence. This otherwise normal squirrel, for example, becomes a cunning thief.

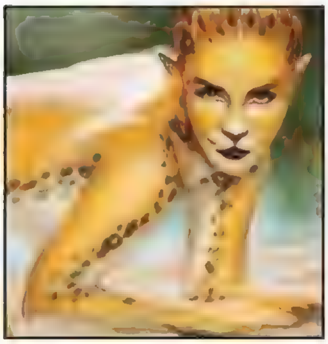
Step-by-step: Turning a human into an animal



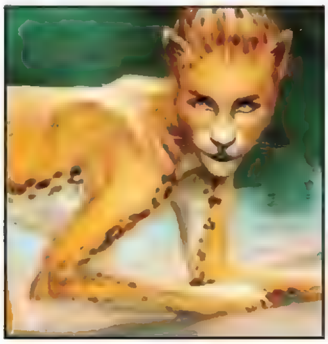
1 When starting with a human, choose a pose that mimics something your animal of choice might do. Here, our model is crouched down in a cat-like pose. I decide in advance to keep her legs and arms mostly intact; when standing she'll look humanoid, so her knees and arms are bent instead of fully extended as they would be if she were a walking cat.



2 I add wild cat colouring to the model by using an Overlay layer to add the golden orange hue to the back, then Overlay and Color to lighten and then desaturate the white underbelly areas. When adding darker animal colouring, try using Multiply instead of Overlay. If your human has dark skin and you want a lighter animal colouring, try adding it on a Screen layer.

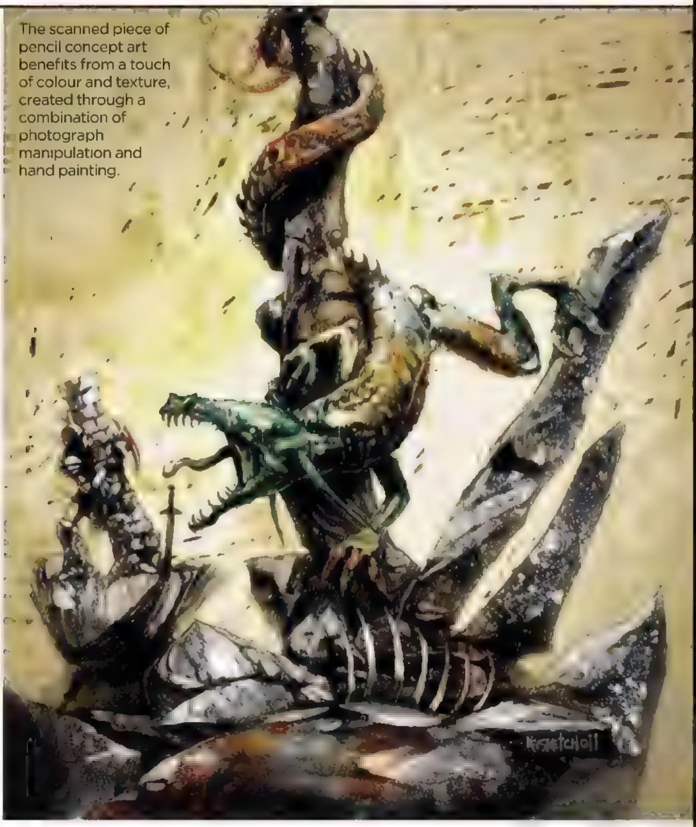


3 After adding colouration, it's time to paint some markings onto my creature. I treat the markings in the same way as stage makeup, so I paint with high opacity on a new layer. For an authentic wild cat look, I add spots in certain choice areas on the skin and hair, as well as facial features such as black lips and nose, and dark black rings around the eyes.



4 Now I add texture, as well as some hints of cat anatomy in the shoulder blades, paws, nose and ears. To move the features around select them with the Lasso tool, and paint over hard edges. When adding fur you don't need to paint every hair; you can give the impression of fur by adding hatch marks around the outer edges, and hatched highlights within.

Question
How can I use unique textures to lift my creature designs?
Bill Reed, US


The scanned piece of pencil concept art benefits from a touch of colour and texture, created through a combination of photograph manipulation and hand painting.

Answer
Kev replies

To create unique textures, I usually rely on my vast library of photographs. When colouring a creature design, it can help to use a bit of texture created by mixing together elements from numerous photographs. In this piece of concept art a wingless dragon is attacking a rather cowardly knight. Although quite detailed, the pencil drawing would benefit from some colour, particularly the dull-looking monster. I need to get some colour down quickly so I choose five interesting photographs of clouds, lichen-covered rock, Virginia Creeper stems, foil from the grill-pan and a dirty cooker hob. (Sometimes letting the pan boil over can have benefits!)

I open the dragon drawing in Photoshop, and paste elements from each photograph into new layers above it. The blending modes, colour balance, hue, scale and orientation of these layers are adjusted, but I'm happy to let the various colours texture the dragon as they 'fall'. It creates a pleasingly random, non-uniform skin tone for the creature, which I enhance with more colour adjustment a little over-painting. This process takes a relatively short amount of time, and creates colour and texture ideas that can be developed further as required.

Artist's secret

THE BENEFITS OF COLOR RANGE

Using Color Range in the Select menu is a great way to isolate specific colour areas within an image simply click a colour within the image. Fine-tuning will create unique textures and overlays in a flash

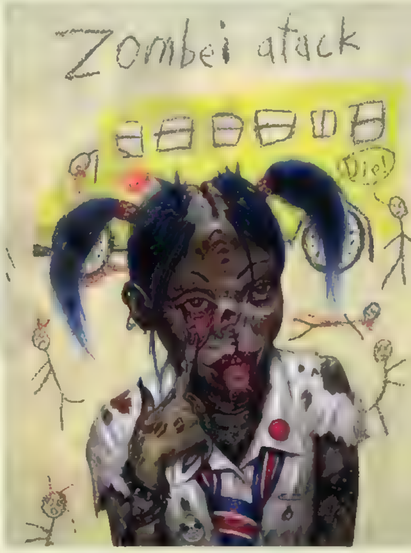
Question
Are there any tricks to creating an image that shocks or surprises?
Simon Edwards, US

Answer
Jim replies

The easy way out is to splatter the image with blood and guts. It'll shock the viewer, but probably won't cause them to want to linger on the image for long.

Over the centuries various social factors have made people more uncomfortable with their bodies, especially their genitalia. Yet deep down we're all fascinated with the human body. So incorporating phallic imagery into your work can make it shocking to look at, but also irresistible to turn away from.

Another approach is to put something cute next to something disgusting. If the viewer wants to see the cute thing, they also have to look at the disgusting thing. If the subjects are handled with the same amount of skill, they'll combine for the viewer into one thing: the beautifully disgusting.



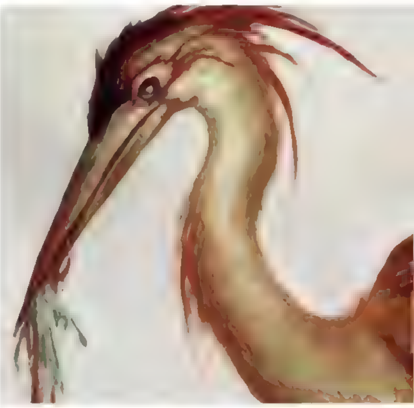
Here I've kept all of the trappings of a cute Harajuku-style schoolgirl, even down to her pose, and turned her into a rotten-fleshed zombie. The result is an arresting image.

Question
Do you have any quick tips for painting a sharp-looking beak?
Kee Ng, Japan

Answer
Lauren replies

Making anything look sharp is largely about good edge control, but first take a moment to think about what kind of beak you want. There are a lot of different shapes of sharp beaks in the natural world. A eagle's beak has a different design to that of the beak of a seed-eating bird or a fishing/skimming bird. There are also non-avian creatures that possess beaks, such as octopuses and some turtles. Even if you're painting an imaginary creature, think about what it uses the beak for. This can help you design a look that is both cool and functional. Gather references for inspiration and guidance.

When painting the beak itself, keep the edges of the beak hard and clean, and pay attention to the values and texture of the beak's form. A few carefully placed highlights or subtle blending will do a lot to make a beak appear hard and sharp. The details like the nostrils or little grooves in the beak are important not to miss.


Beaks come in many shapes and sizes. The important thing is to not oversimplify. Colour detail, texture and shine all make a beak look more real.

Question

What painting techniques can I use to make a character look soaking wet?

Lacy Rosenberg, US

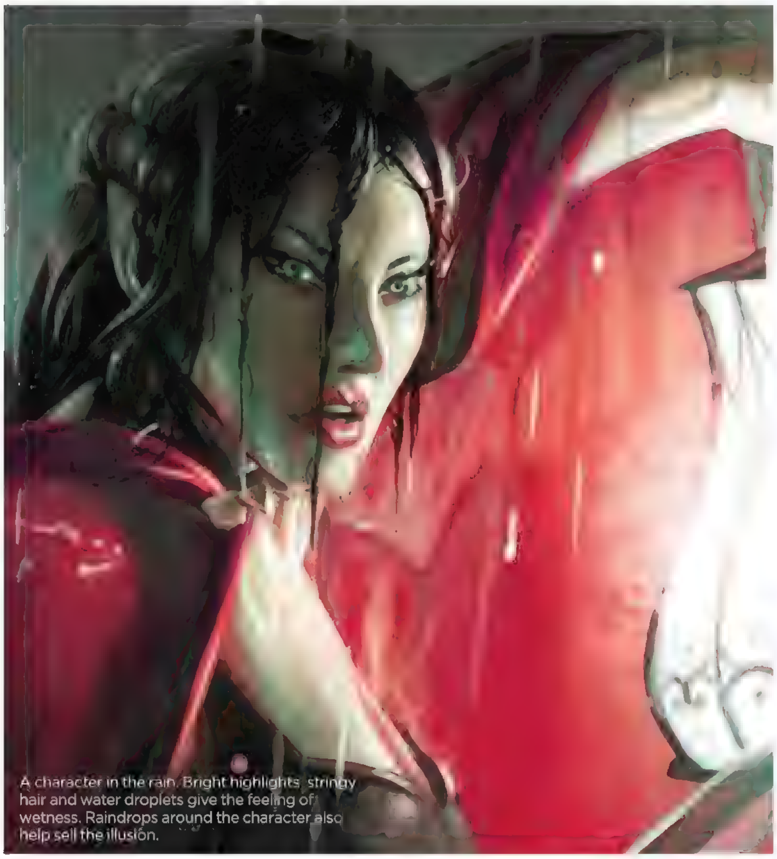
Answer

Cynthia replies

The easiest way to give your character a wet or shiny look is to use small, bright highlights. Normally, when we see a face in strong light, like my example here, we expect the light to be distributed fairly evenly over the side facing the light. Instead, you can see bright white highlights on the forehead, nose and above the lip.

My second suggestion would be to give your character stringy hair. Even if your character's hair is normally curly, the water that's soaked into it would give it extra weight, and make it hang straighter. Like fabric, hair also becomes darker when wet, so your character's blonde hair might appear brown, or brown might look closer to black.

Water droplets and environmental cues help finish off the look. Add streaks of water running down a character's skin, using a colour that's just a bit lighter than the skin, gives a great effect. If your character is drenched, he or she might have drops of water falling from her nose, chin or hair. Adding hatch marks of rain or using a soft Round brush, set to low opacity to suggest dense mist, increases the believability that your character is in a wet place.

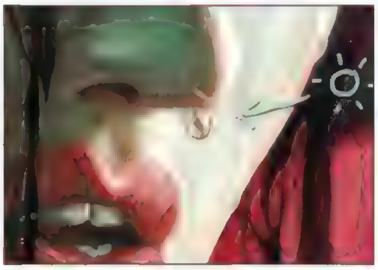


A character in the rain. Bright highlights, stringy hair and water droplets give the feeling of wetness. Raindrops around the character also help sell the illusion.

Artist's secret

SKIN AS A REFLECTOR

As well as having brighter, smaller highlights, wet skin also picks up nearby colour, more than dry skin does. In the main image, for example, you can see red from the cape reflected under the character's chin and on the side of her face

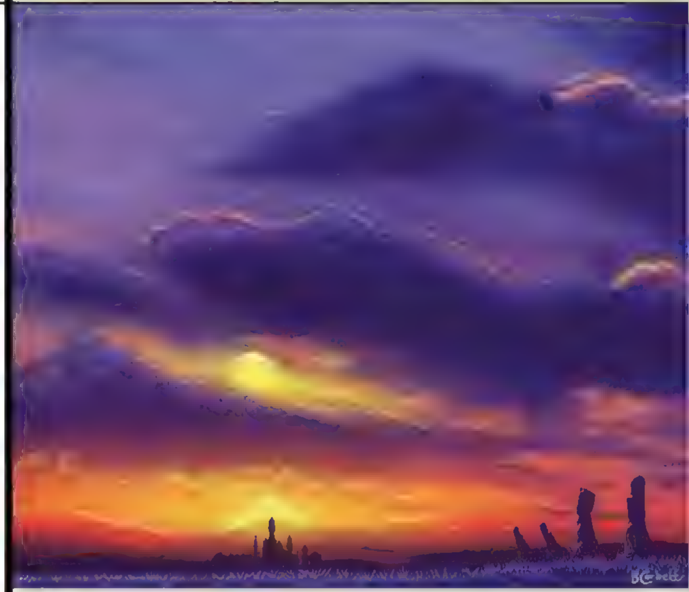


Anatomy of a droplet. As light enters at one side, it creates a point of light on the other side. The colours inside the drip should come from the environment.

Question

What's the best way to quickly paint a colourful sunset?

Daniel Howard, US



Silhouettes are perfect for distant sunsets. They add to the atmosphere without dominating the picture – after all, the sunset is the star of the image.

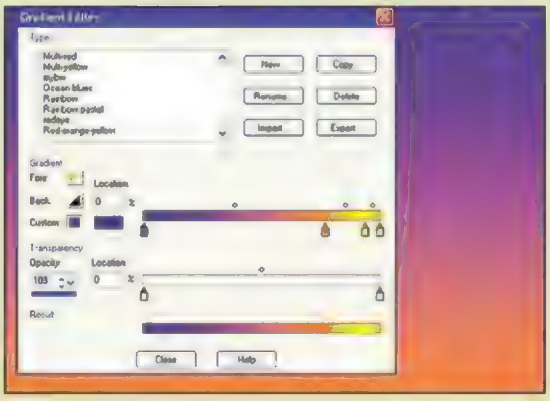
Answer

Bill replies

Sunset and sunrise are probably the most colourful times of the day. This is due to the scattering of long-wave colours when light travels from the sun. The effect is extremely colourful and is easy to replicate. I'm using Paint Shop Pro, but any art program will do.

Start by creating a multi-colour gradient or gradient-ramp and configure the transition of colours from yellow to orange to blue. This will automatically generate all the other spectrum colours required for a sunset. Drop the gradient, starting with yellow upwards, from the horizon line. Now paint the sun near the horizon using the Elliptical Marquee Tool.

If you prefer to paint your sunset from scratch, as I've done here, you'll have to make the colour graduations yourself. I start from the horizon and paint upwards with a warm yellow (a Round brush set around 50 per cent Opacity). I then graduate the yellow into orange and from orange to a pinkish red. Finally, I blend the red through to violet, purple, then blue. On another layer I paint out the clouds in blue with smaller highlights catching the back of them.

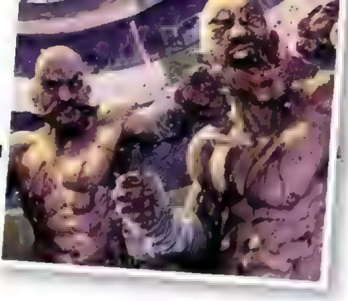


Location 0 %

Opacity 100

Location 0 %

Making a simple gradient can produce a sunset in seconds. It can stand on its own or be embellished with additional cloud details.



Next month

ON SALE: 3 February

How to give a character dynamic motion

Question

I want to design and paint a plump, fantasy creature – where do I start?

Nina Davies, UK

Answer

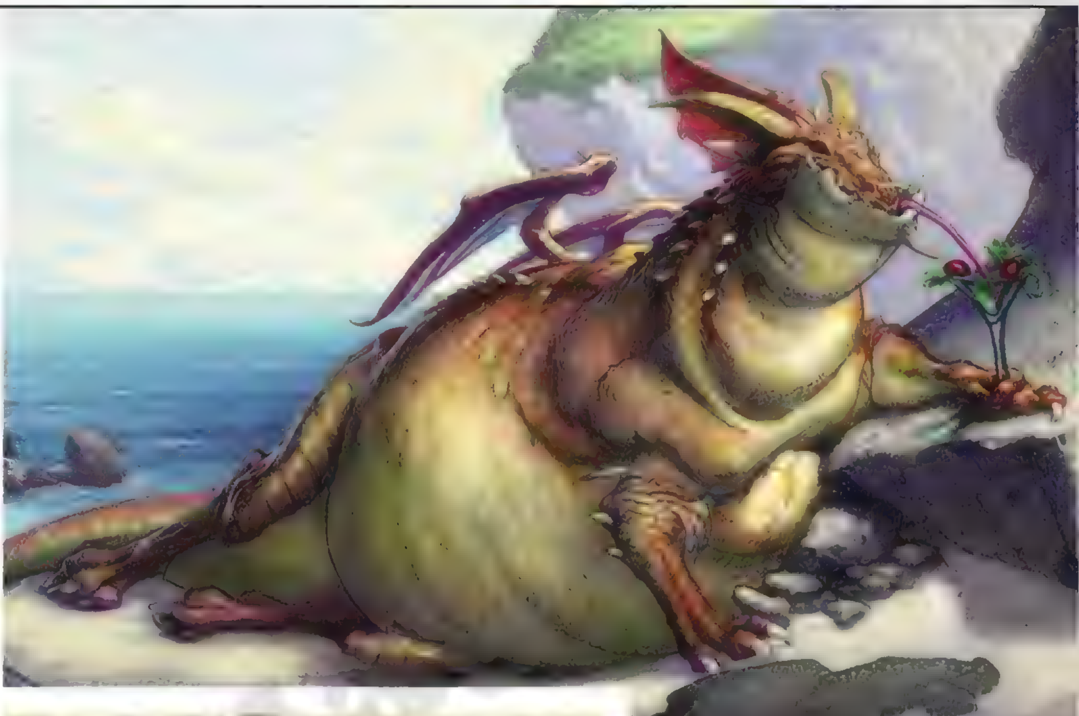
Nick replies

Pretty much any critter can put on weight in the right circumstances, so why not a dragon? For me, deciding on a personality early on is key. Is this to be some ancient, ferocious terror, a plump teenager or something in between?

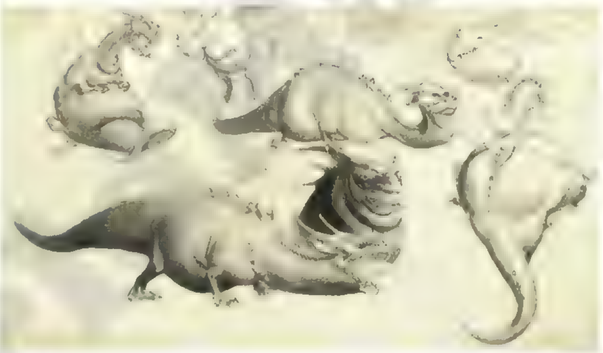
In all cases the underlying structure still needs to work, although it may be compromised by the extra weight. Does our portly dragon have a bowed back or bandy legs because of its bulk, for example?

I'm working in SketchBook Pro, but whatever you use, go for the large volumes first. My dragon is a rather comic creature, so chubby that she has something of the look of a slug about her. It's important to keep a balance in mind as you work: that despite the bloating, this still has to read as a dragon. I keep the claws sharp and bony, but reflect the weight through keeping them comparatively small. It's the same with the wings. They would be inadequate to lift such weight, but help identify the beast as a dragon.

I'm using some custom texture brushes to create a few different-shaped scales. By setting the brush controls to respond to size I can paint strokes to follow the rounded forms and reinforce them. You can have lots of fun playing with this sort of thing. As with any software, I tend to work on multiple layers to build up subtlety and tonal depth. SketchBook Pro now supports a few layer-blending modes that really help with this. Just make sure you have fun.



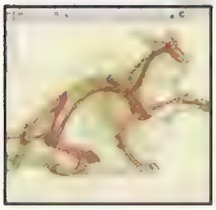
Understanding the basic structure of a creature can help you develop its personality and physicality without it looking unnatural.



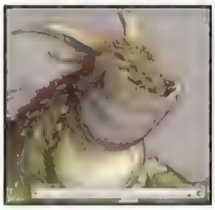
Your painting will only be as good as its foundations. Start by doodling and sketching to get some ideas bubbling away on the subject. In addition, look at other images for inspiration, including work by those artists you admire.

Step-by-step: Creating a creature that's piled on the pounds

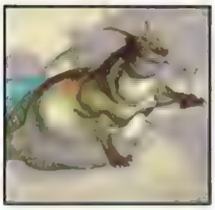
1 If you get the structure to work first, then the elements should fall more easily into place. Roughing in a basic skeleton on a layer that won't be a part of the finished image can help avoid problems later. Granted, it's a bit twisty, but this crude effort aids me with pose and limb placement. I'm using a bit of contrapposto (counterpose) here.



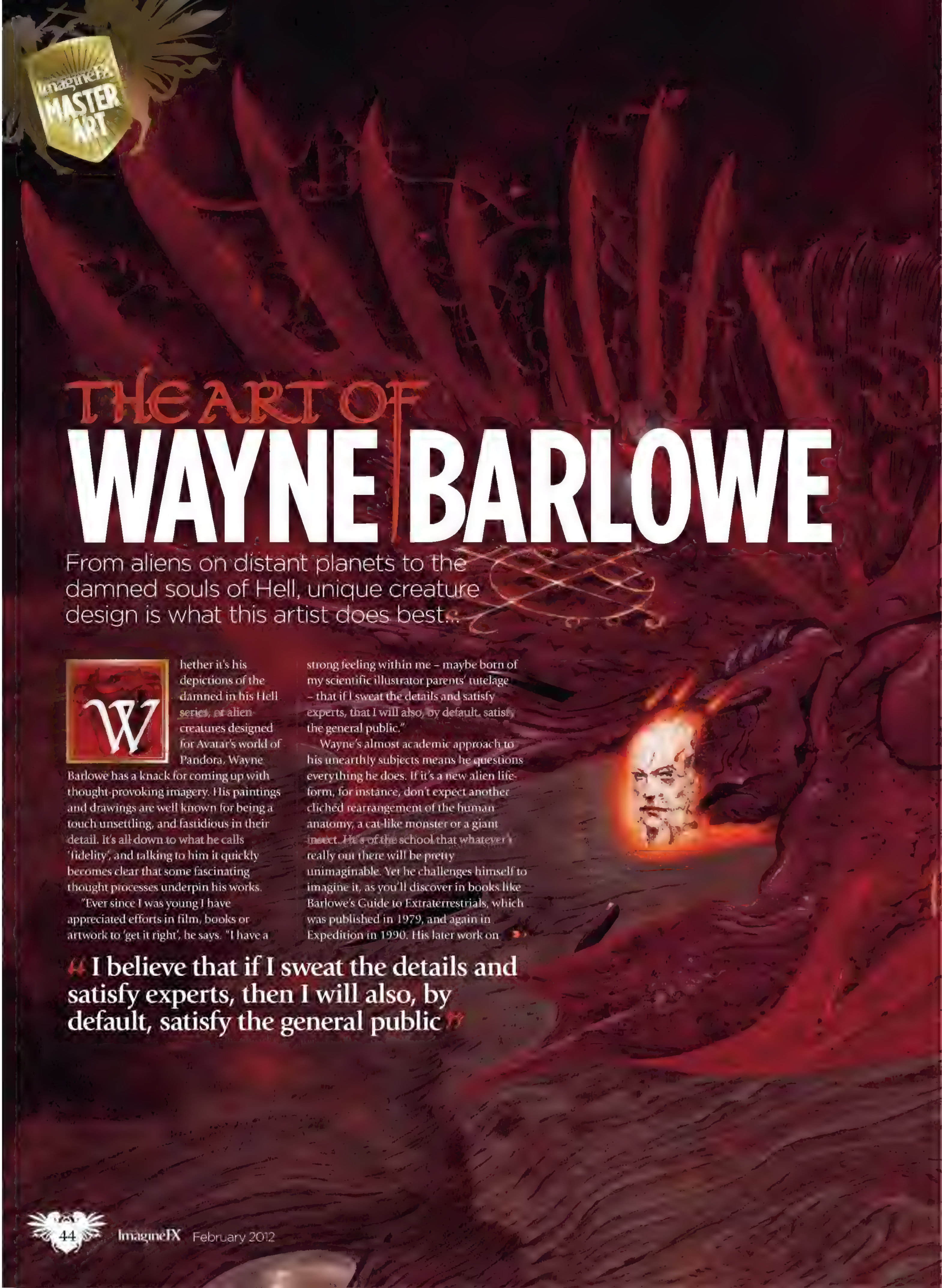
2 Once I have some overall shapes that I like, I bring in extra lumps and bumps on the surface to add visual interest. Do keep an eye on retaining the integrity of the bigger shapes though, because it's easy to become beguiled into enjoying the details, to the detriment of the whole image. It's a pitfall that I often have to backtrack from.



3 Working in SketchBook Pro, I place Multiply blend mode layers over the top of layers, set to Normal Color, to build up both tone and colour on my overweight dragon. I also work in skin patterns and different types of scales in a similar way, refining certain areas with additional line work on the drawing as I go, using Multiple layers.



Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at **help@imaginefx.com** or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**



THE ART OF WAYNE BARLOWE

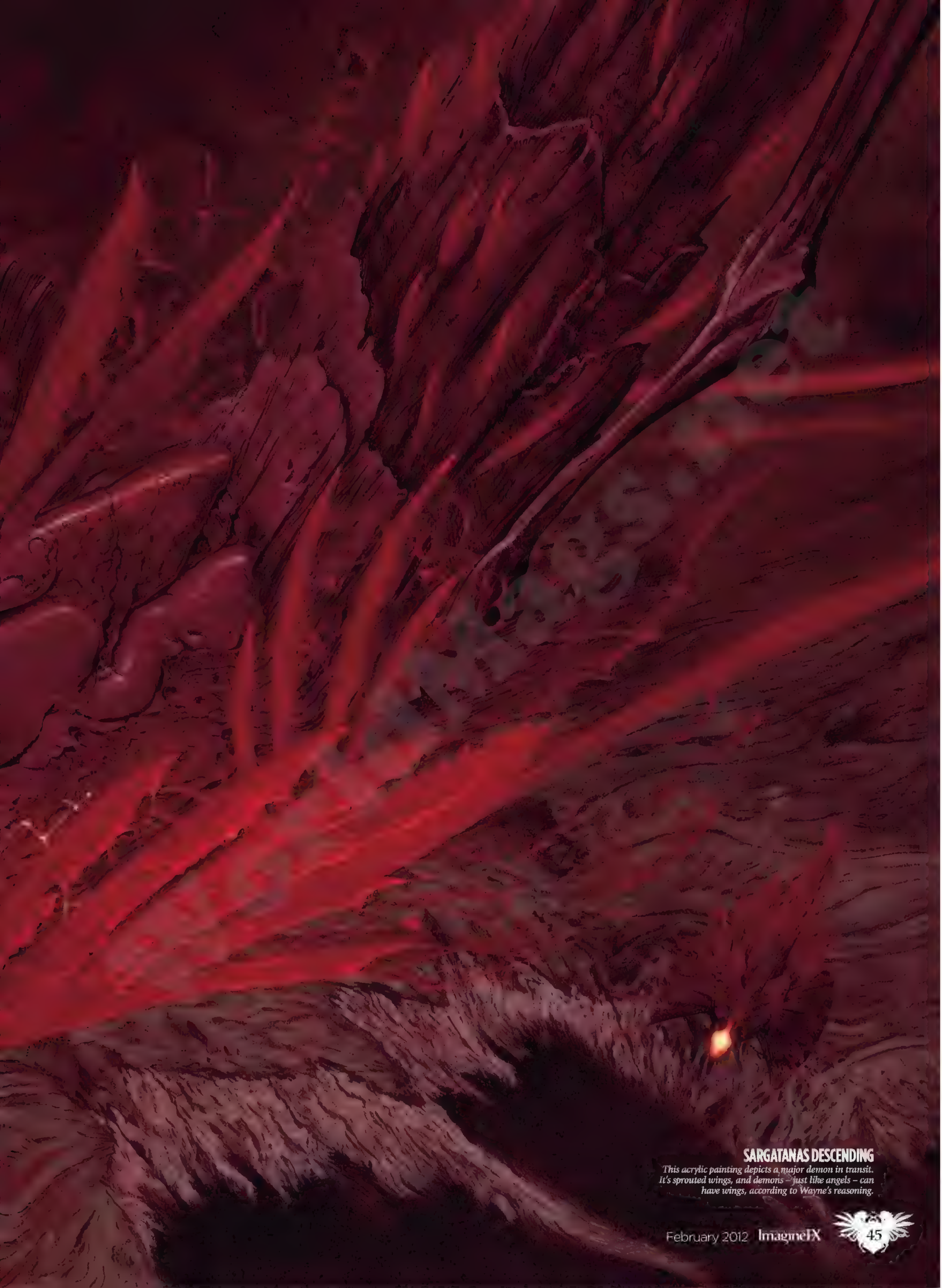
From aliens on distant planets to the damned souls of Hell, unique creature design is what this artist does best...

Whether it's his depictions of the damned in his Hell series, or alien creatures designed for Avatar's world of Pandora, Wayne Barlowe has a knack for coming up with thought-provoking imagery. His paintings and drawings are well known for being a touch unsettling, and fastidious in their detail. It's all down to what he calls 'fidelity', and talking to him it quickly becomes clear that some fascinating thought processes underpin his works.

"Ever since I was young I have appreciated efforts in film, books or artwork to 'get it right', he says. "I have a strong feeling within me – maybe born of my scientific illustrator parents' tutelage – that if I sweat the details and satisfy experts, that I will also, by default, satisfy the general public."

Wayne's almost academic approach to his unearthly subjects means he questions everything he does. If it's a new alien life-form, for instance, don't expect another cliched rearrangement of the human anatomy, a cat-like monster or a giant insect. He's of the school that whatever's really out there will be pretty unimaginable. Yet he challenges himself to imagine it, as you'll discover in books like Barlowe's Guide to Extraterrestrials, which was published in 1979, and again in Expedition in 1990. His later work on

> “I believe that if I sweat the details and satisfy experts, then I will also, by default, satisfy the general public”

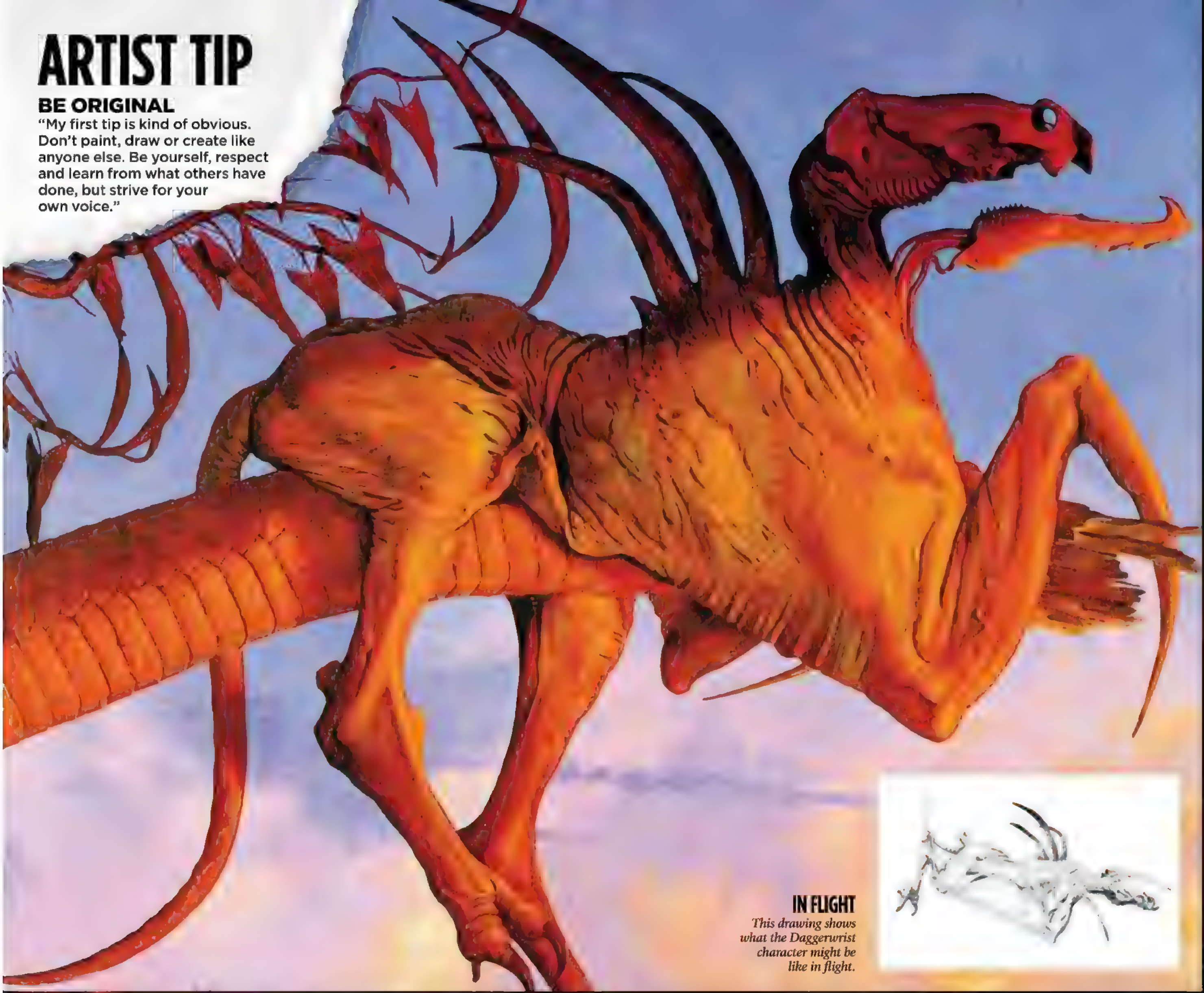


SARGATANAS DESCENDING
This acrylic painting depicts a major demon in transit. It's sprouted wings, and demons – just like angels – can have wings, according to Wayne's reasoning.

ARTIST TIP

BE ORIGINAL

"My first tip is kind of obvious. Don't paint, draw or create like anyone else. Be yourself, respect and learn from what others have done, but strive for your own voice."



DAGGERWRIST

With no eyes and no hair, and a different approach to alien design, Wayne was happy with Daggerwrist, the first image painted for his book Expedition.

IN FLIGHT

This drawing shows what the Daggerwrist character might be like in flight.

Avatar led James Cameron to comment: "Wayne Barlowe designs the trippiest aliens out there."

IMAGINING THE UNIMAGINABLE

Indeed, the New Jersey-based artist comes to life when you bring up what creatures from the other side of the universe will look like. "I believe that whatever we might find out there will defy our egocentric conventions and probably make us pretty uncomfortable," Wayne says. "From what I'm reading these days, the very nature of physics may be different in other regions of the universe. So, with that said, the best we can do in sci-fi books and film is weird foreheads and ears...?"

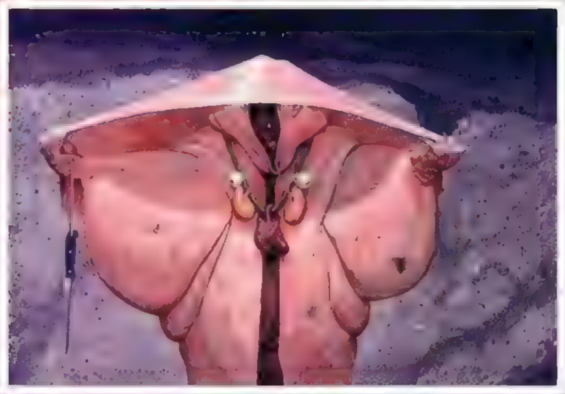
He continues: "I like thinking as abstractly as I can when I design aliens. I like to throw in things that are cool-looking but not necessarily explicable. After all, are we so sure we'll recognise every organ or appurtenance for what it is? Enigma is a wonderful tool and a necessary element in the creation of what is truly alien."

> "I believe that whatever we might find out there will defy our conventions and make us pretty uncomfortable"

When work began on Avatar, Wayne was the first artist called in to design some of Pandora's creatures. He headed up the design team in 2005 working with three other artists, and even though this was very early in the project, some of the creatures he came up with made it through the entire production process. His influence on leonopteryx (the biggest, baddest, flying dinosaurs) and the direhorses (ridden by the Na'vi) is clear to see when you compare his sketchbook to what appeared on screen.

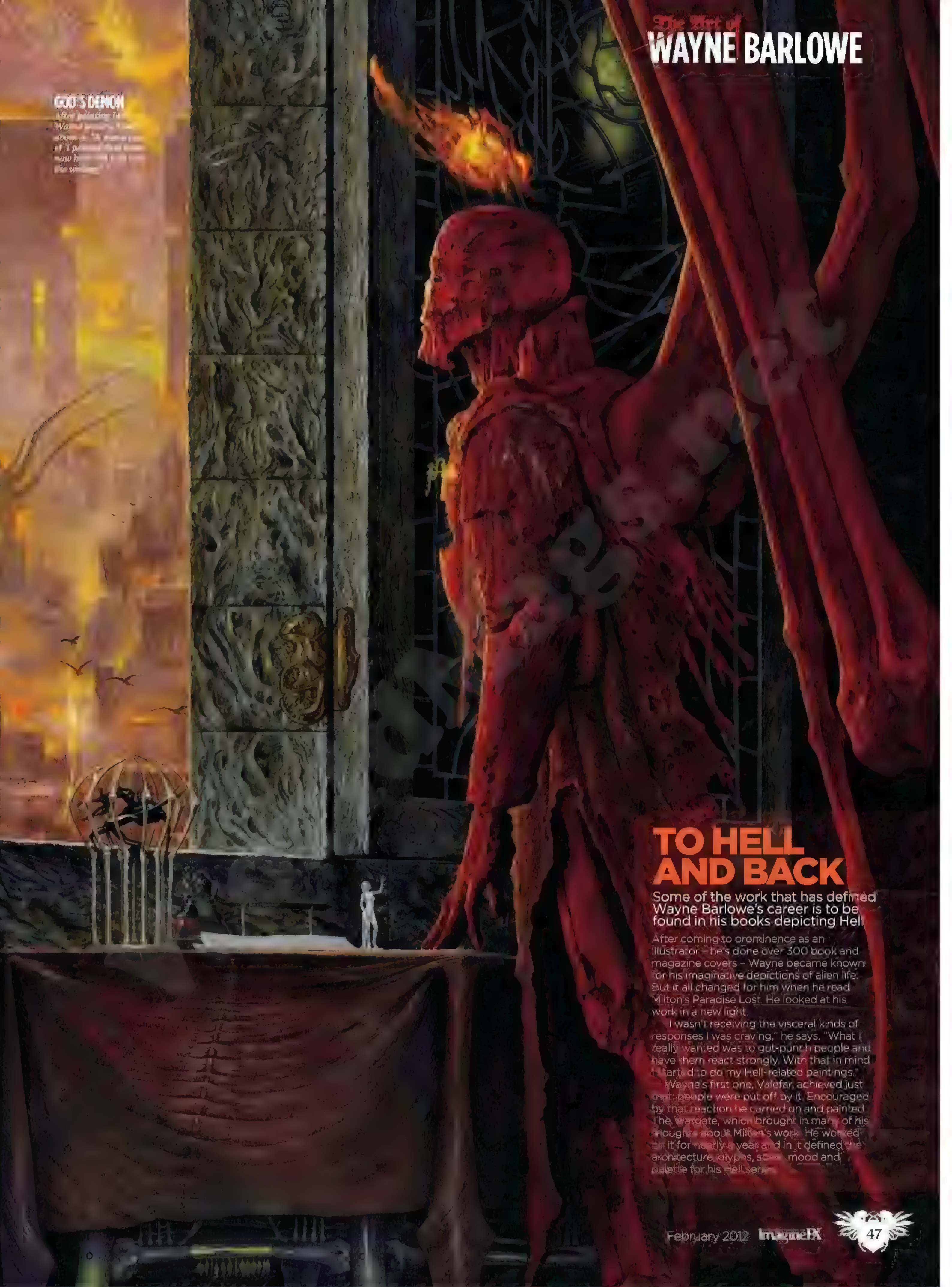
The film took so long to make that by the time 'The Art of...' book was being assembled few could remember what his contributions included. Nevertheless, he appears in the publication, and is proud of the movie. "I floated a lot of pretty strange ideas and approaches but Jim wisely pulled me back from going too far. He wanted creatures that his audience could relate to and understand in an instant, creatures that were beautiful but clearly dangerous. I'm truly proud to have contributed to those designs, to have laid out, with Jim's encouragement, an overall visual foundation for the fauna that we see on the screen."

More recently Wayne's been working on The Hobbit – another top-drawer project. He can't tell us much about this eagerly



VALEFAR

Here's Wayne's very first Hell image: "People I showed it to were a bit put off," he says.



GOD'S DEMON
After painting [illegible] Wayne [illegible] about [illegible] it. "I pictured [illegible] now [illegible] the window."

TO HELL AND BACK

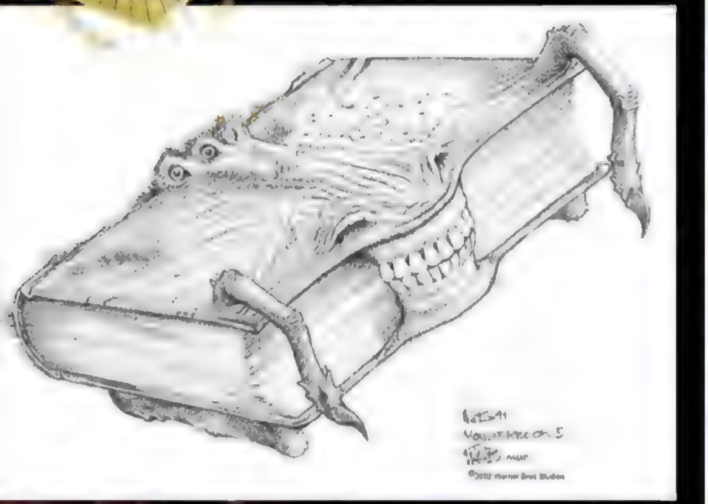
Some of the work that has defined Wayne Barlowe's career is to be found in his books depicting Hell

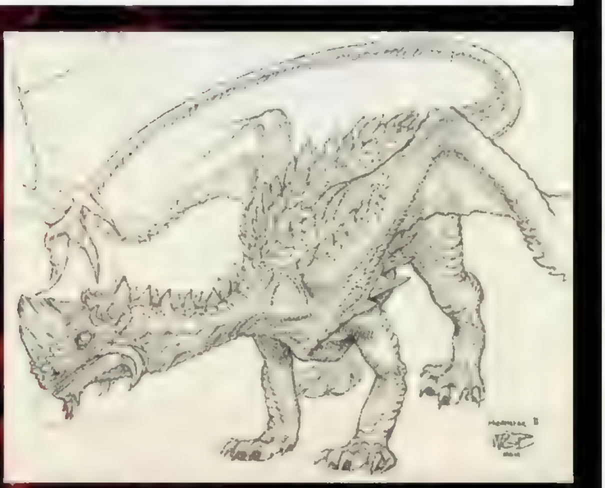
After coming to prominence as an illustrator – he's done over 300 book and magazine covers – Wayne became known for his imaginative depictions of alien life. But it all changed for him when he read Milton's Paradise Lost. He looked at his work in a new light.

"I wasn't receiving the visceral kinds of responses I was craving," he says. "What I really wanted was to gut-punch people and have them react strongly. With that in mind I started to do my Hell-related paintings."

Wayne's first one, Valefar, achieved just that: people were put off by it. Encouraged by that reaction he carried on and painted The Wargate, which brought in many of his thoughts about Milton's work. He worked on it for nearly a year and in it defined the architecture, glyphs, scale, mood and palette for his Hell series.

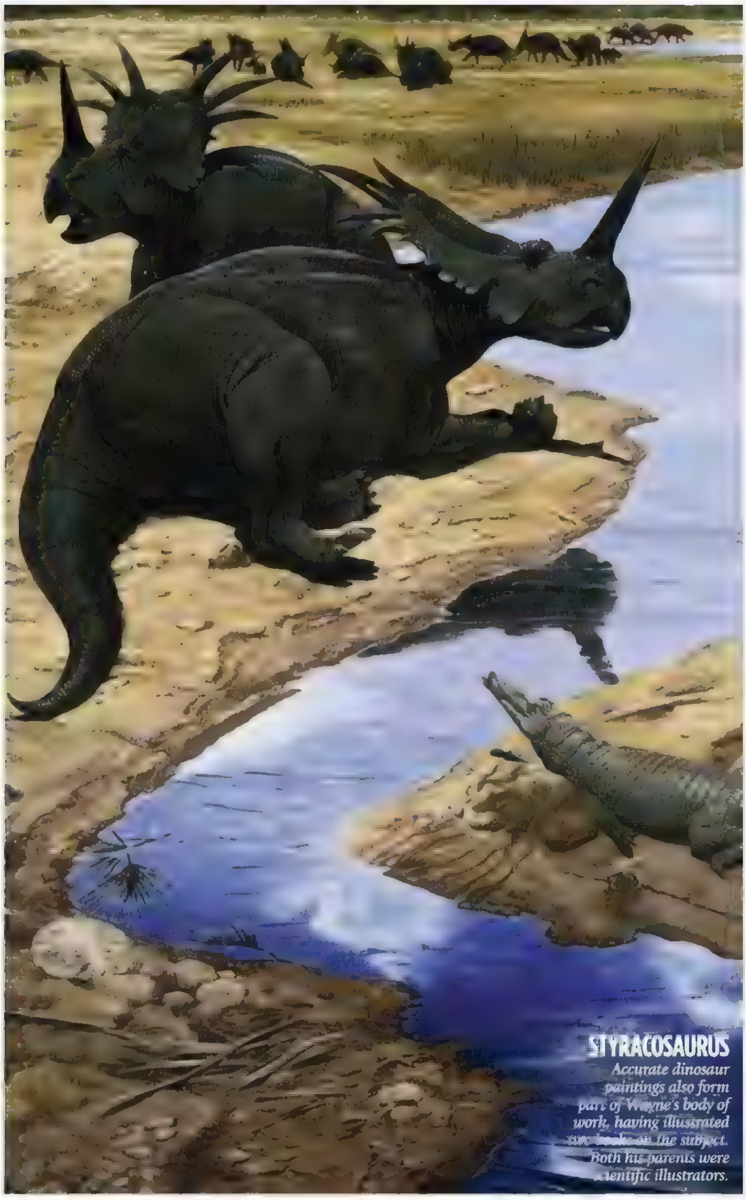
MONSTERBOOKS
The Monsterbooks seen in Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban were another of Wayne's responsibilities on the film.





HUNGARIAN HORNTAIL
Wayne also worked on the fourth Harry Potter film, The Goblet of Fire. In addition to the Deatheater costumes, he produced concepts for the Horntail dragons.

Harry Potter images © 2004/2005 Warner Bros



STYRACOSAURUS
Accurate dinosaur paintings also form part of Wayne's body of work, having illustrated six books on the subject. Both his parents were scientific illustrators.

awaited production thanks to the far-reaching NDA he signed, but he did spend six months in New Zealand working under Guillermo del Toro who was directing the film at the time. He left the project in the hands of John Howe and Alan Lee, and has returned to New Jersey with a new-found appreciation for Maori artwork, as well as some of their tattoos.

Even though he's only just discovered Maori designs, Wayne thinks traces of that aesthetic can be seen in some of his work. But as influences go, he has a long-standing love of artists like Howard Pyle, Frederic Church, Ludwig Deutsch, Dean Cornwell, Maxfield Parrish, Frank Frazetta and James Bama. "Of all of them, I guess Pyle's influence was the greatest. His brushwork, composition and colour sense worked for me as well as the way he told stories with paint. The man was amazing. I'm not sure that, in terms of art appreciation, I've changed all that much in the years since I was a youth."

Other major Hollywood pictures that Wayne has worked on include Hellboy and Hellboy II, as well as the third and fourth Harry Potter movies (The Prisoner of Azkaban and The Goblet of Fire). For instance, his hand can be seen in the design of Buckbeak, the Monsterbooks, the Dementors and the Deatheaters.

> "Abyssals – the indigenous creatures of Hell – could be nightmarish in any way that I could conceive"

HELL'S ANGELS

Aside from aliens, dark magic and demonology are a speciality of Wayne's. In the late 1990s, he turned his attention from the creatures that might be flitting amongst the heavens to those creeping around beneath us in the fires of Hell. In 1998, Barlowe's Inferno was published, followed in 2001 by Bushfire: Illuminations from the Inferno. His inspiration for these books was not Dante's poetry or the Gustav Dore woodcuts that accompany it. Rather, it was the 17th century English poet John Milton.

Of course, when the subject is Hell, all kinds of powers come into play that aren't to do with the physical universe we know. For Wayne, it was a completely different kettle of abstract weirdness, but he wanted it to feel cohesive. While magic would be an element of his Hell, it wouldn't be an excuse for anything that looked out of place. Everything from the demons to the architecture to the strange glyphs in his paintings was carefully crafted.

He had his own 'bible' of rules. "Demons, for the most part, had no noses or ears (burned off), bone-plate faces, a hole where their heart was, floating hornlets, deep-sea fish bioluminous spots, and so on. But the parameters of all of those elements are so variable that I found myself able to go on and on without

THE ART OF AVATAR

If you've seen Avatar, then you've seen some of Wayne's creature designs come to life on the big screen

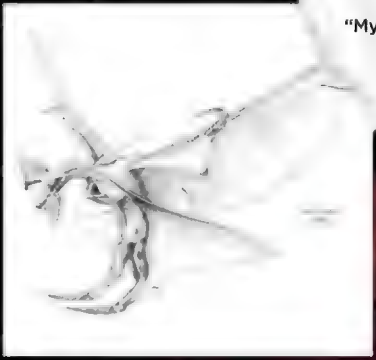
In 2005 Wayne was drafted into head an art team tasked with visualising some of the animals that would live on Pandora, the world that director James Cameron was inventing for the movie. His notion that life in other parts of the universe will be radically different from what we know on Earth was a guiding principle, in the beginning at least.

"I did some early experimentation with creatures that were pretty extreme. I was asked to factor in a few ideas that Jim wanted reflected in the designs. Smooth skin, colourful markings, a toxic atmosphere – these were a few of the things that were kind of basic guidelines. After some head-scratching, I came up with a marriage of two design concepts: F1 car detailing and cetacean forms married to provide smooth contours and flat surfaces, something I referred to as an 'automotive look'."

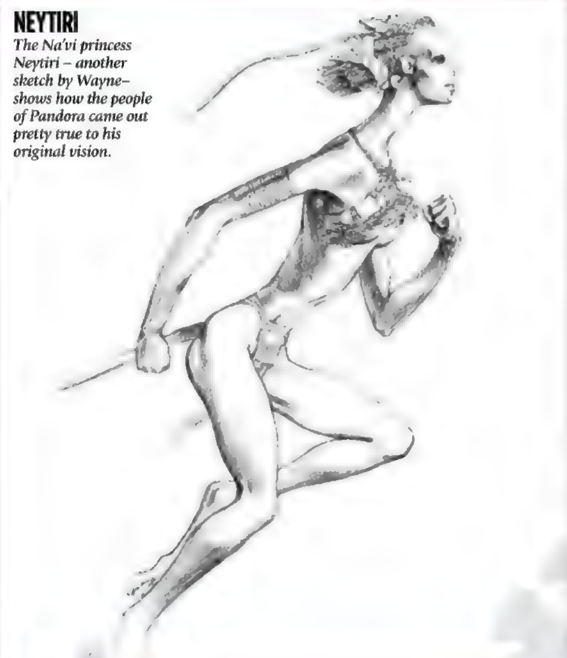
ARTIST TIP

DRAW, THEN DRAW SOME MORE

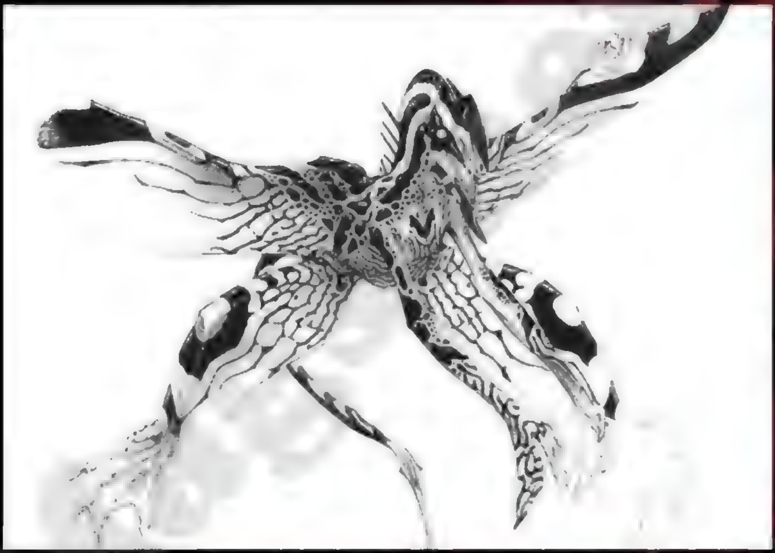
"My second tip is to make sure you can draw well. No matter what medium you're using, whether it's digital or traditional, drawing is the keystone."



TERROR FROM ABOVE
The Great Leonopteryx in Wayne's sketchbook didn't change a great deal as the film project went on, looking similar to the one seen in key battle scenes in Avatar.

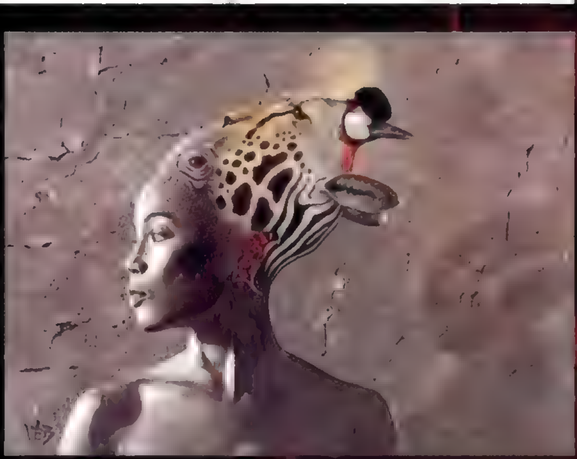


NEYTIRI
The Na'vi princess Neytiri – another sketch by Wayne – shows how the people of Pandora came out pretty true to his original vision.



STINGBAT
The elaborate body markings on this sketch were something James Cameron wanted Wayne to explore for this airborne creature.

Avatar images © 20th Century Fox 2009.



WILD SEED
In 1995 Wayne painted this cover for Wild Seed by Octavia Butler, one of over 300 book jacket and magazine cover illustrations he's done.

© Quest 1995

exhausting the possibilities. They are former angels and would have been terrifying to begin with. Post-fall they would be steaming, burned, tortured and frightening," Wayne says.

"Abyssals – the indigenous creatures of Hell - could be nightmarish in any way I could conceive. I was heavily influenced by deep-sea fish, and had to have biolights and exoskeletal bodies, the latter an adaptation to deal with the ubiquitous fires of Hell. And the souls – well, there I could really play with distorting the human form in ways that defied anatomy."

After painting Hell, Wayne took to writing about it and his novel God's Demon came out in 2007. It was based on a screenplay he'd written some years prior, but the picture didn't get made. Now, he has another screenplay on the way and he's got high hopes for it. "With any luck, that will be something to keep an eye out for in the next couple of years. And I have two other ideas for screenplays that need to be explored," he says.

"I will also, finally, be recommencing work on the sequel to God's Demon, entitled The Heart of Hell. That one will be a big job, but worth it to continue what I began. And, of course, I will continue painting, drawing and creating worlds. Because that's what I do."

WAYNE BARLOWE VITAL STATISTICS

"Drawing is the keystone"

Date of birth
6 January 1958.

Place of birth
Glen Cove, New York.

Current location
New Jersey.

Favourite artists
Howard Pyle, Zdenek Burian, Ernst Fuchs, Hans Holbein (his drawings) and Frederic Church.

What's the best thing about New York?
It's more or less tolerant cultural diversity. I think that everyone should be forced to visit the city at least once in their lives.

Would you rather live in a glass house, or a house with no windows, and why?
A house with no windows. I paint naked.

If we discovered life on another planet today, what colour would the aliens be, really?
Grey – that's what all the authors say, anyway.

If you were going to Hell, who would you have lunch with?
Sir R. F. Burton – he'd be exploring, of course.

What interesting items would we find at your desk when you're drawing/painting?
A piece of Libyan desert glass, a mosasaur tooth, a paua shell, a replica moa skull and an Ashley Wood Bertie.

What story do you most want to illustrate?
The Worm Ourosboros – it's one of my favourites.

Web address:
www.waynebarlowe.com

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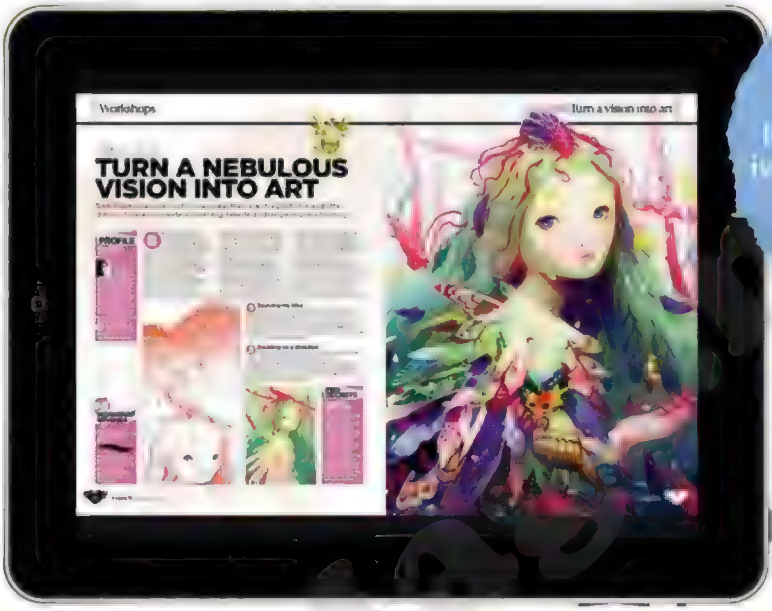

ImagineFX
20
FANTASY ART

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Issue 73 September 2011

ImagineFX
FANTASY ART

Create a radiant mermaid with Mélanie Delon, learn how to render real skin tones, age your art and paint like Frazetta. It's a fantasy special for our Q&A section, which covers everything from painting chain mail to fiery dragon breath. We also talk to famed concept artist and designer Roger Dean.

Issue 74 October 2011

ImagineFX
STAR WARS

Our Star Wars issue is full of imagery from a galaxy far, far away. We find out what it was like to work on the Prequel trilogy, and talk to the legendary Ralph McQuarrie. On the workshop front Iain McCaig reveals how to paint a Sith warrior, and Terryl Whitlatch explains creature design on a galactic scale.

Issue 75 November 2011

ImagineFX
GAMES ARTIST

Our game art issue kicks off with the stunning imagery for Guild Wars, while StarCraft, Uncharted 3 and Magic: The Gathering all feature in our packed workshop section. Elsewhere, you'll doubtless feel inspired by the art of Chesley award-winner Lucas Graciano. Plus: how to paint a space-opera princess.

Issue 76 December 2011

ImagineFX
DESIGN

It's all go in our vehicle design special, as great artists including Syd Mead talk us through the Mechanics of Industrial Design. Then we explain how to paint a giant 3D fighting mech, a fleet of retro starships, and futuristic scenes using custom brushes in Photoshop. Oh, and 2011's Rising Stars results are in!

Issue 77 Christmas 2011

ImagineFX
DIGITAL ART

Artists from China, Japan and South Korea feature in this issue's knock-out workshop section, which covers traditional, 2D and 3D art. Chinese painter Wenjun Lin gives us an insight into the digital art scene in his homeland, while Jesper Ejsing opens up his portfolio to reveal fantasy creatures that are all too believable!

Issue 78 January 2012

ImagineFX
Art Nouveau

We celebrate Art Nouveau, including a Legends feature on Alphonse Mucha. Elsewhere there's a Remko Troost workshop on slow-painting, Don Seegmiller on how to blend with colour, Sean Andrew Murray tours Arthur Rackham's illustrious world and much, much more.

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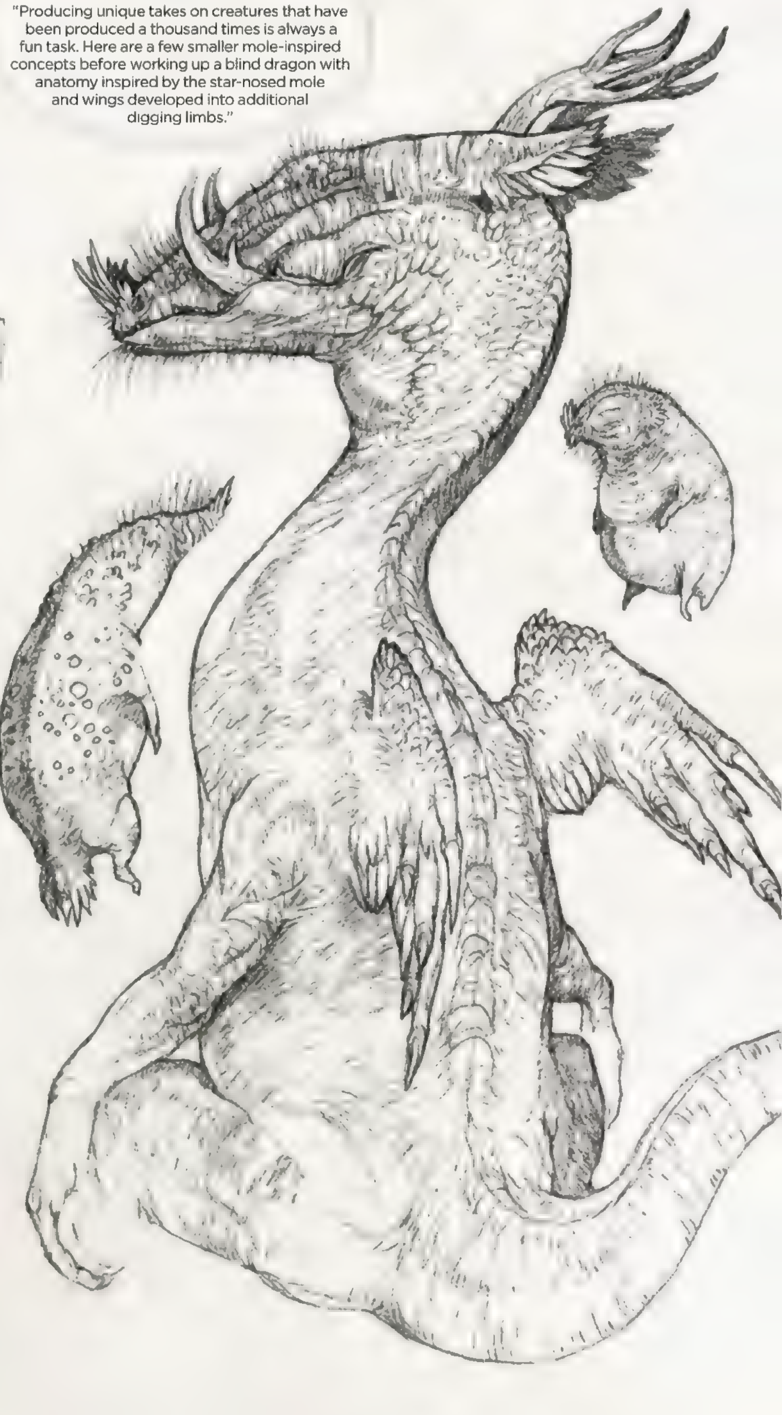
Mike Corriero

Be glad that you're not living in a world populated by Mike's imaginative collection of beasties and critters

Artist PROFILE

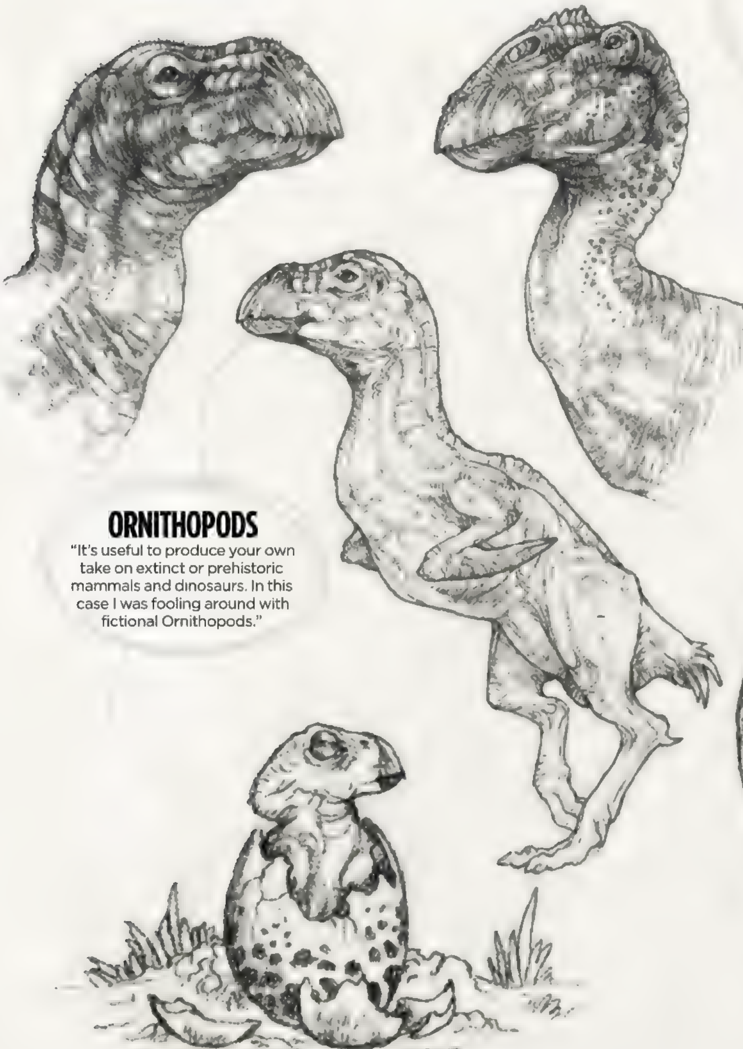
Mike Corriero
COUNTRY: US

Mike is a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the video game and film industries. He's produced work for companies such as Hasbro Inc., Paizo Publishing, Liquid Development, Radical Entertainment and most recently has been providing conceptual character designs for a young adult novel and graphic novel. Mike specialises in creature design and development, character design and environments.
www.mikecorriero.com



BLIND DRAGON

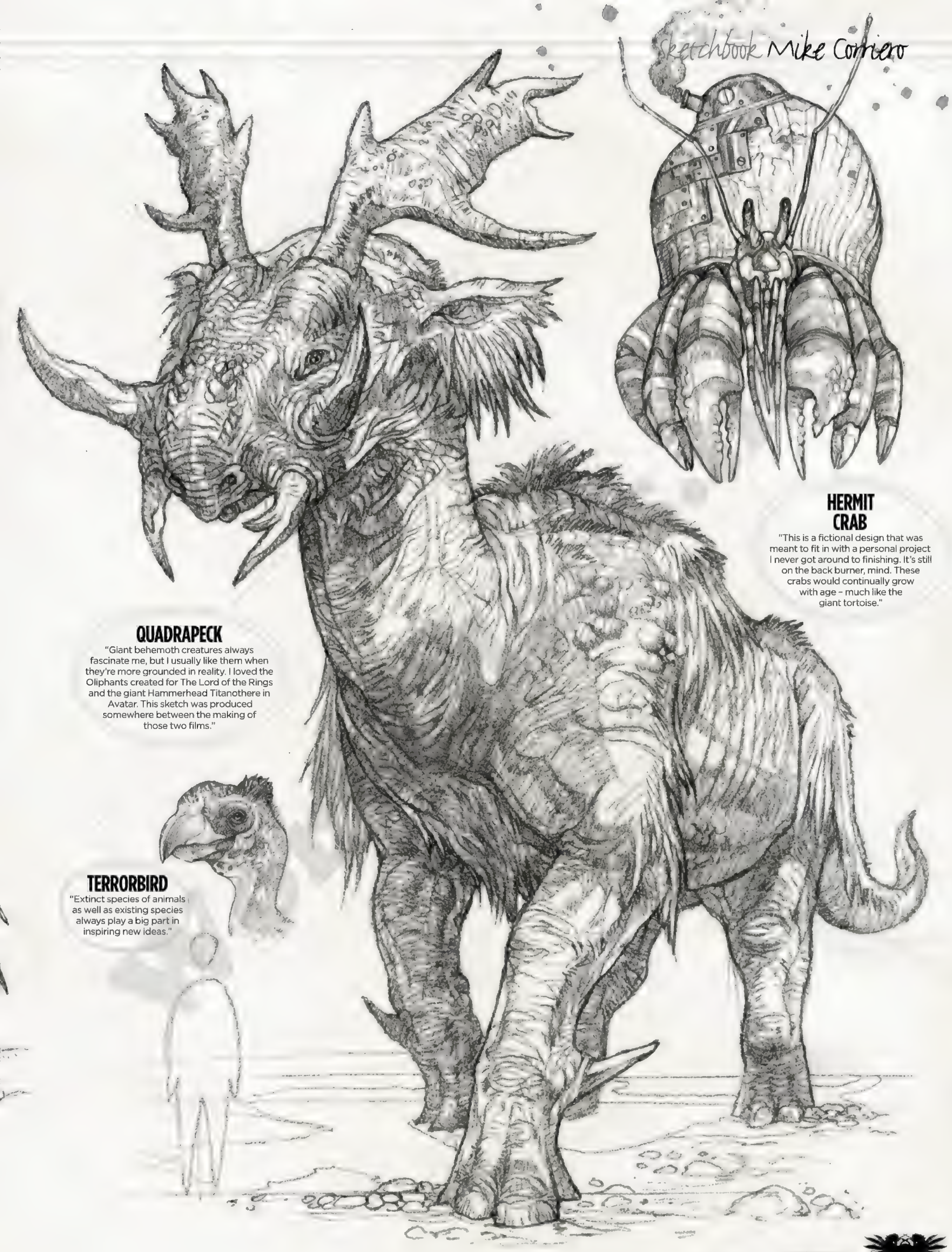
"Producing unique takes on creatures that have been produced a thousand times is always a fun task. Here are a few smaller mole-inspired concepts before working up a blind dragon with anatomy inspired by the star-nosed mole and wings developed into additional digging limbs."



ORNITHOPODS

"It's useful to produce your own take on extinct or prehistoric mammals and dinosaurs. In this case I was fooling around with fictional Ornithopods."

> "Producing unique takes on creatures that have been produced a thousand times is always a fun task"



HERMIT CRAB

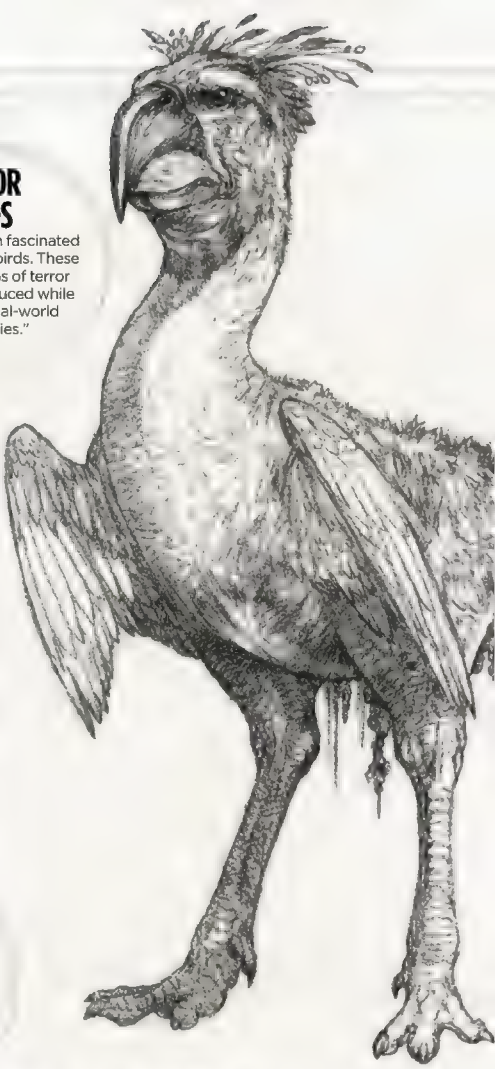
"This is a fictional design that was meant to fit in with a personal project I never got around to finishing. It's still on the back burner, mind. These crabs would continually grow with age – much like the giant tortoise."

QUADRAPECK

"Giant behemoth creatures always fascinate me, but I usually like them when they're more grounded in reality. I loved the Oliphants created for The Lord of the Rings and the giant Hammerhead Titanothere in Avatar. This sketch was produced somewhere between the making of those two films."

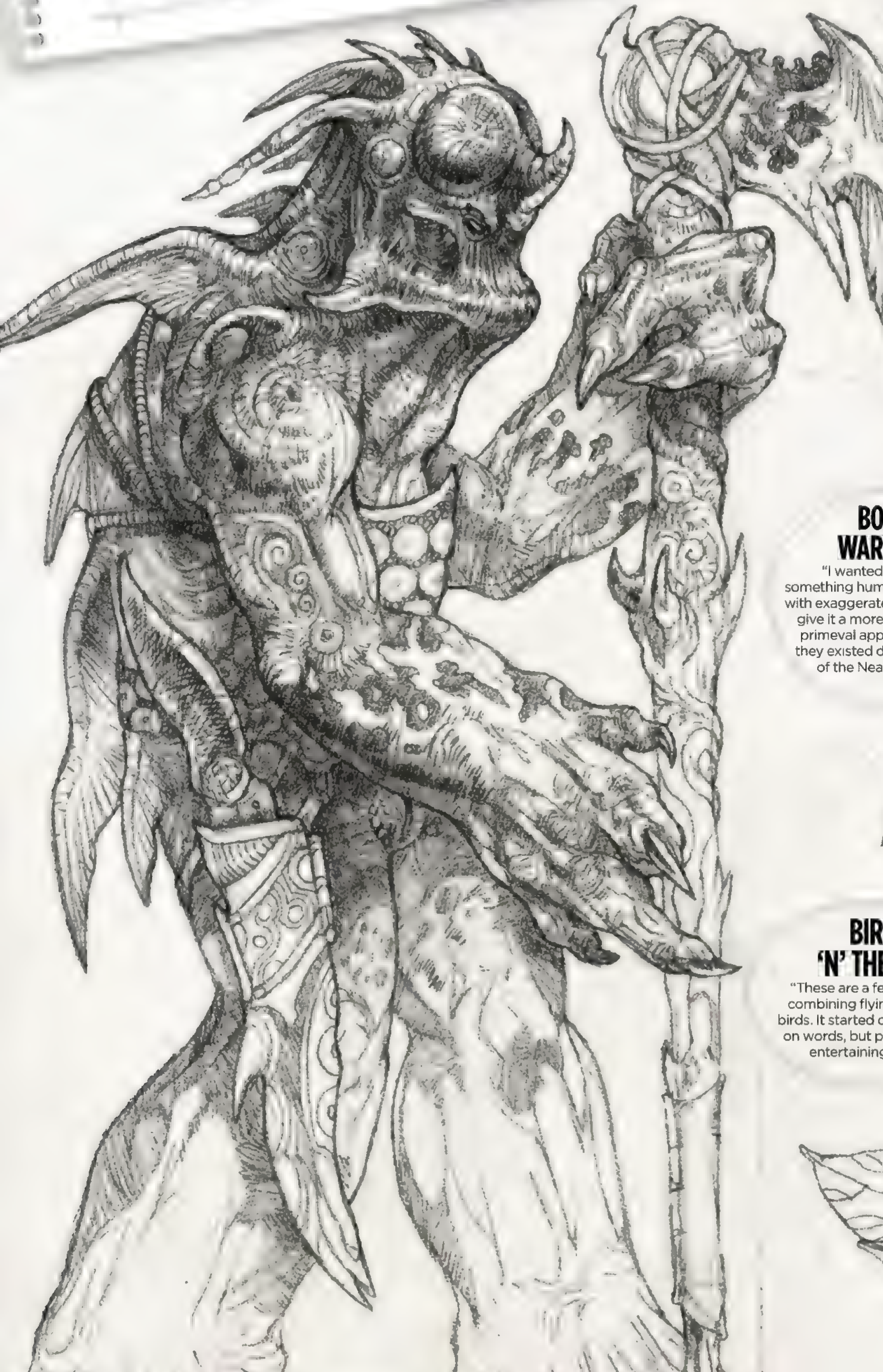
TERRORBIRD

"Extinct species of animals as well as existing species always play a big part in inspiring new ideas."



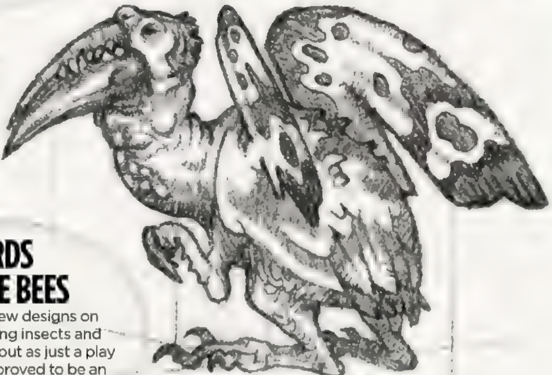
TERROR BIRDS

"I've always been fascinated and inspired by birds. These fictional designs of terror birds were produced while referencing real-world bird species."



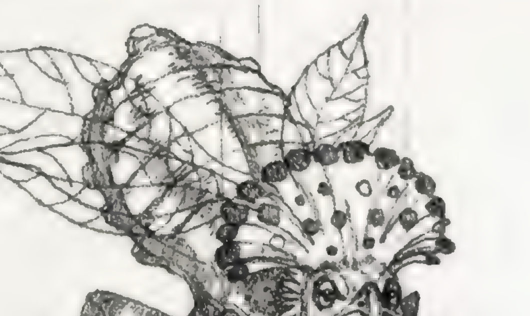
BONE WARRIOR

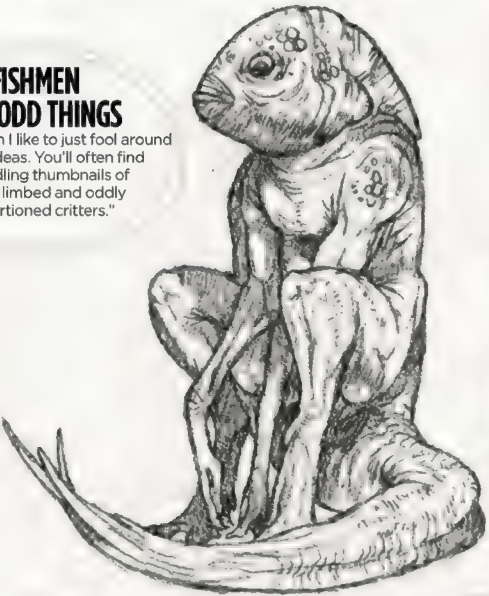
"I wanted to design something humanoid and alien with exaggerated anatomy, yet give it a more historical and primeval appearance, as if they existed during the time of the Neanderthals."



BIRDS 'N' THE BEES

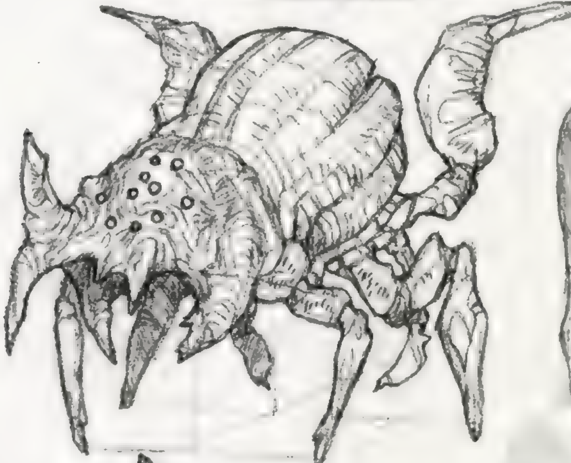
"These are a few designs on combining flying insects and birds. It started out as just a play on words, but proved to be an entertaining exercise."

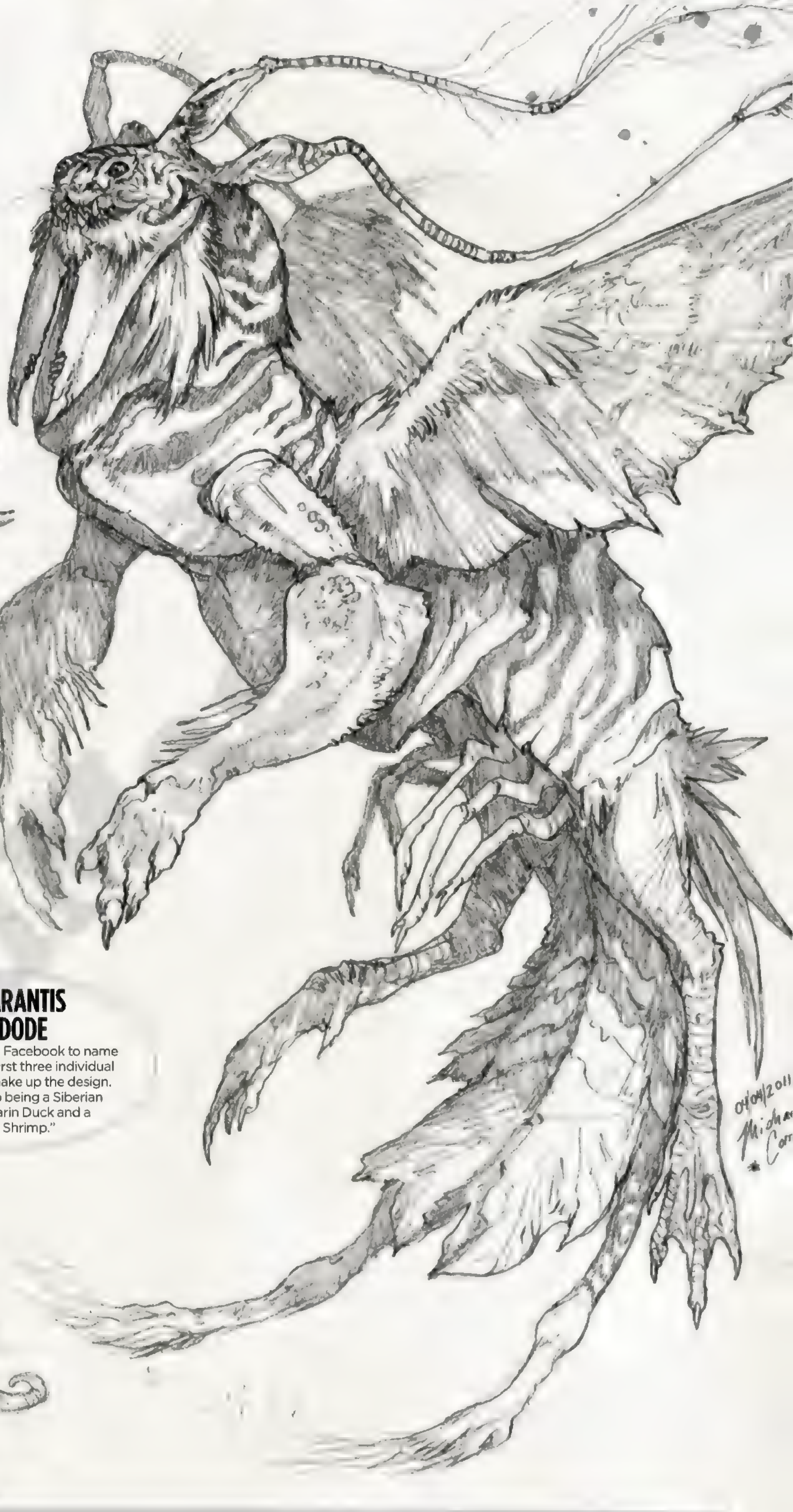




FISHMEN AND ODD THINGS

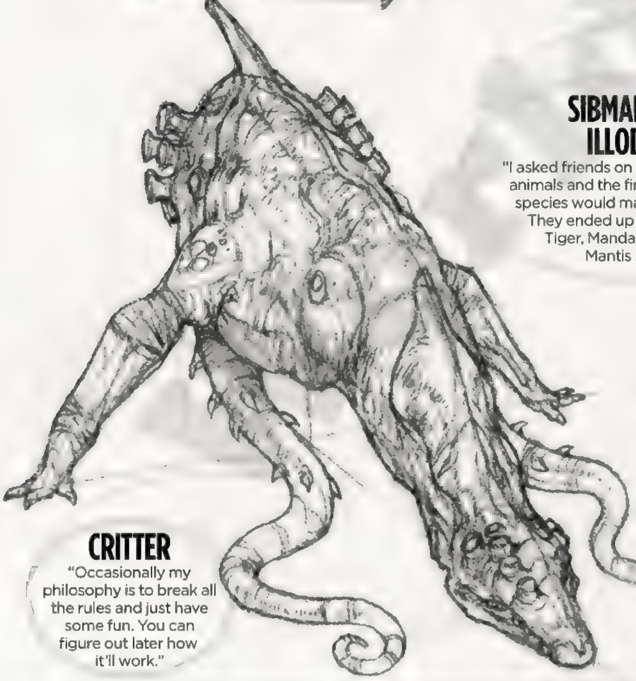
"Now and then I like to just fool around with silly ideas. You'll often find me doodling thumbnails of strange limbed and oddly proportioned critters."





SIBMARANTIS ILLODODE

"I asked friends on Facebook to name animals and the first three individual species would make up the design. They ended up being a Siberian Tiger, Mandarin Duck and a Mantis Shrimp."



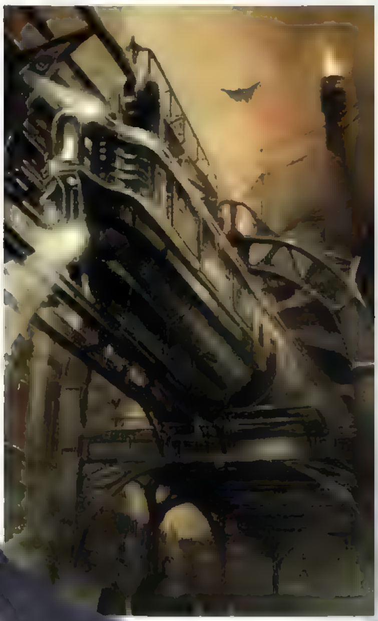
CRITTER

"Occasionally my philosophy is to break all the rules and just have some fun. You can figure out later how it'll work."

Want to share your sketches? Or know an artist you'd like to see featured in Sketchbook? Then drop us an email at **sketchbook@imaginefx.com** or upload your sketches at **www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook**.

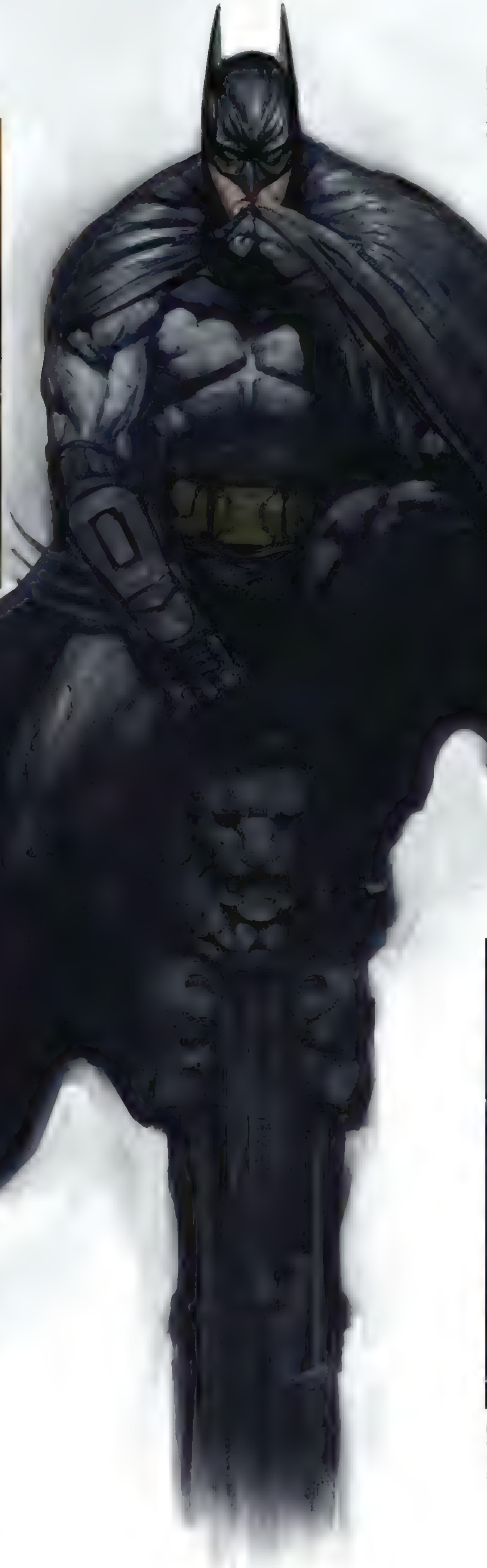
GOTHAM MONORAIL

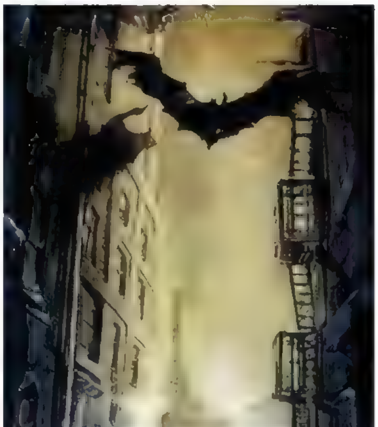
Each section of the city was created with a distinct style that referenced real-world architecture and art.



BATMAN CAPE

The concept art team worked with the WildStorm artists to develop a new depiction of the familiar DC character. Hyper-realism and stylisation combined to create a mix of familiarity, realism and exaggerated silhouettes.





GOTHAM ALLEY

Taking notes from past DC comics and films, the concept team created its own unique take on the Batman world, nicknamed the Arkhamverse.

Name Rocksteady Studios **Location** London, England
Projects Batman: Arkham City, Batman: Arkham Asylum, Urban Chaos
Web www.rocksteadyltd.com

LIFE AS A CONCEPT ARTIST

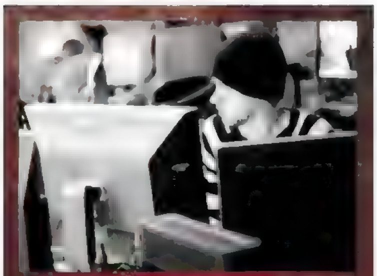
What does it take to be a concept artist and how can you break into this competitive industry? The art team behind **Batman: Arkham City** helps us get some answers…

Scratch beneath the surface of any TV, film or video game and you'll discover a team of concept artists hurriedly sketching new worlds, characters and artefacts to bring the project to life. It's a growing profession that's no longer simply about conveying ideas of imagined people and places, but now feeds into marketing, storytelling and game design. So just what does a concept artist do and how can you land this dream job?

"I think it depends on the artist and their preferred skills," says senior concept artist Lee Oliver, when asked how an aspiring artist can break into the industry. If you're choosing a formal education then "an illustration course will help with the storytelling side of a concept, while an industrial design course will push on design skills," says Lee.

HARD GRAFT

Once in the job you'll be worked hard. Lee himself created over 500 pieces of concept art for Batman: Arkham City and admits that roughly only 75 per cent of those images features in the finished game. The role of a concept artist is to deliver the expectations of the client, meaning that not every concept makes it through the pipeline. "One of the biggest reality challenges of being a concept artist is giving the client and company exactly what they're after," explains Lee.



10 WAYS TO BE A CONCEPT ARTIST

The Rocksteady concept artists reveal their tips for landing your ideal job

1 Practise drawing and painting a number of different subjects, and try not to limit your portfolio to one genre.

2 Never be afraid of your painting software, because sometimes mistakes can be a good thing.

3 Try to keep your portfolio limited to your best works, around 20-30 pieces. Art directors have busy schedules so it's a good idea not to bore them with too many sketches and paintings.

4 You have to be willing and ready to move pretty much anywhere in the world. It's easy to say, but leaving your friends and family to go work in some other country is a pretty big decision.

5 If you're wondering how to improve your character design skills, why not check out and draw modern fashion – say, from the catwalk? There are plenty of interesting shapes going on there.

6 Practise drawing and painting realistic interiors, because you'll most likely end up doing lots of these.

7 If you can draw a box correctly, then you can draw the whole of Gotham. A good foundation in drawing is required for the career as a concept artist.

8 Draw everything around you because you never know what kind of thing you'll have to conceptualise on the job.

9 Don't send your portfolio only to big companies. These days there are a lot of independent little studios creating all kinds of games, and those jobs could be just as interesting and challenging as in any other big places.

10 Your concepts need to work, so don't be an artist, be a designer!

"You do get freedom on a project like Arkham City, but company decisions have to be respected."

This freedom extends to the method and software chosen by the artist to fulfil the client's brief. At Rockesteady, Lee explains an artist can use "whatever you feel helps to get the job done to the best of your abilities". This means 2D or 3D software is used at the visual development stage.

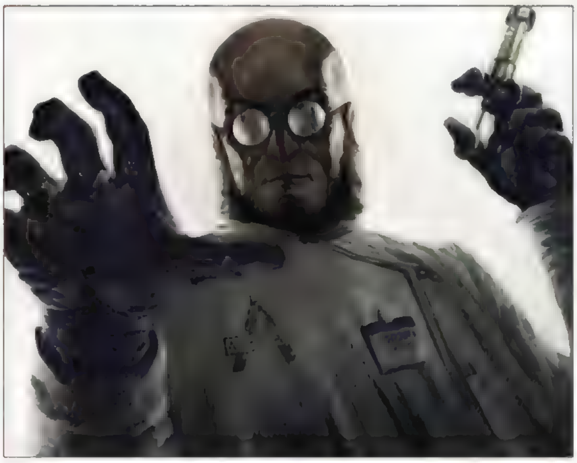
A solid grounding in art theory – in particular 2D practices – is essential at a leading entertainment studio such as Rocksteady. While characters like Batman will always grab the headlines, for a concept artist every detail in a video game is important. As Lee explains, for the company's two Batman games this meant the artists needed "strong knowledge of 2D construction drawing". He reveals that this stretched to hardware and environments, as well as characters: "It's an essential part to working in a studio like Rocksteady".

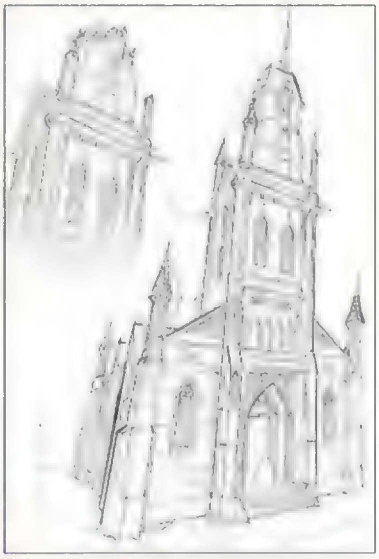
While working on the games' environments, concept artist Kan Muftic needed to master these skills, learning about architecture and building design to create Arkham City. Each area of the city had to feel unique while fitting into a consistent world, which involved everything from Gothic and Victorian architecture to glass and iron Art Nouveau décor, creating layers of styles that highlighted the city's evolution.

The museum in Arkham City is just such a design that Kan is rightly proud of. "I pushed that idea from the very beginning of the project," he says. It represents concept art at its best: an idea taken to its ultimate conclusion that even meant Kan had to design and paint murals, dioramas and exhibits to appear in the game, fleshing out the world and bringing this virtual space to life. "I feel more like a concept designer than a concept artist,"

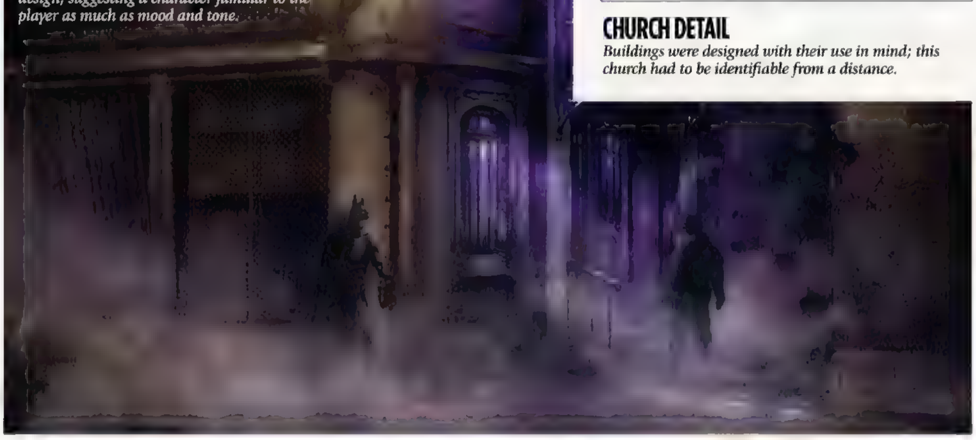
> “It's important to consider the character in-game instead of just thinking about the pretty drawing”

HUGO STRANGE
A concept artist has to consider how a character will be used in-game, developing function and aesthetic in one go.





CHURCH DETAIL
Buildings were designed with their use in mind; this church had to be identifiable from a distance.



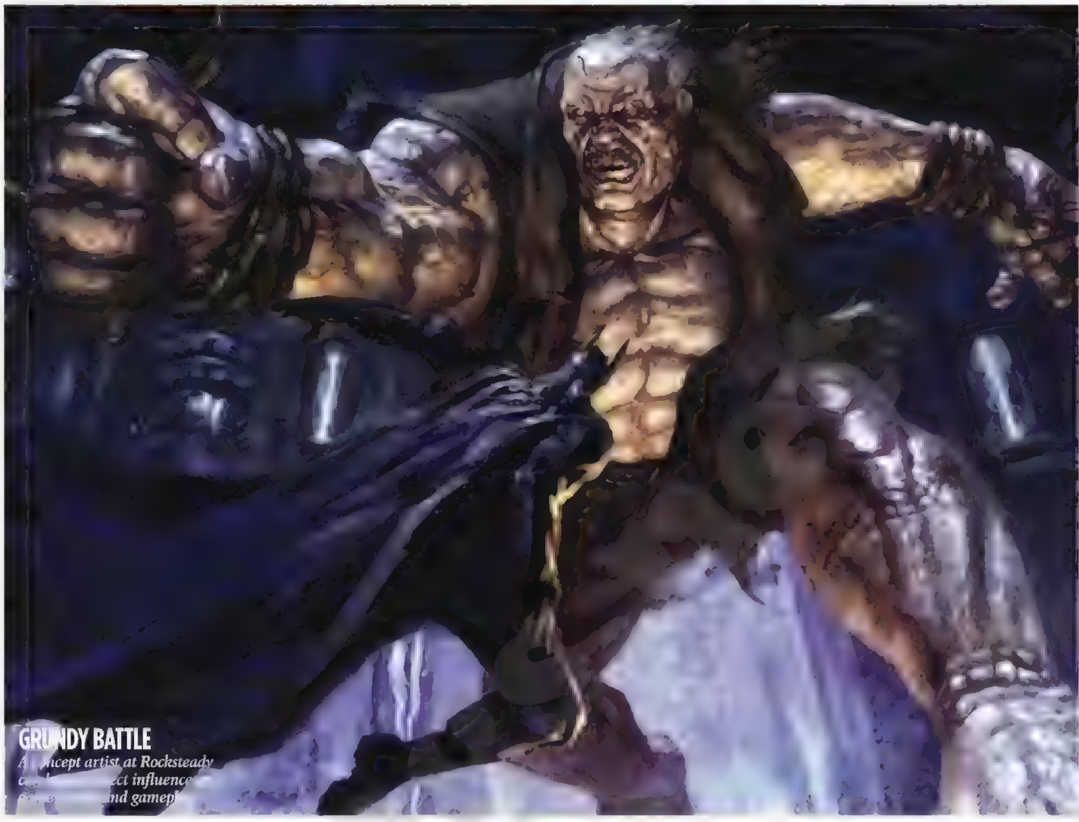
ICEBERG LOUNGE ENTRANCE
Colour plays an important role in a concept design, suggesting a character familiar to the player as much as mood and tone.

says Kan. "There's a lot of engineering involved in my work."

Although concept artists can immerse themselves in a project and focus on the aesthetic values, a video game artist also needs to consider how the designs will be implemented and used. "It's important to consider the character in-game instead of thinking about the pretty drawing," confirms Kan. Understanding what a character will be doing and how the player will interact with it gives video game concept artists another dimension of thought. "It's useful to know what the character is doing in the game while I'm drawing, because it'll help me give him personality," says Kan.

THINK BEYOND THE IMAGE

Concept artists don't work in bubbles, furiously sketching out ideas that dictate the rest of a project. The role is more malleable. A concept artist, such as Lee and Kan, will work up and down the production pipeline, reworking and refining ideas to fit the direction that a project takes. It means that sometimes, on a video game, the concept artist can affect the gameplay design. "Gameplay is king," stresses Kan, but identifies how the visual development can sometimes bring new



GRUNDY BATTLE

A [illegible] ncept artist at Rocksteady [illegible] ect influence [illegible] nd gamepl

SO, WHAT DOES A CONCEPT ARTIST DO?

Rocksteady's Kan Muftic explains his role and routine

VISUALISATION

"One of my main roles at Rocksteady is to visualise and develop the first waves of ideas," says Kan. This is what we all come to understand as the role of a concept artist, to create sheets of raw, inspirational visuals. "The goal is not to create polished images, but to generate many loose sketches that will spark ideas and interest with the rest of the team."

PRODUCTION ART

The next stage is to take on those ideas, the ones the team and the art director feel work the best, and develop them. This production art stage is different to the earlier visual development, says Kan. "This is where I need to show exactly how things will look, so I draw character orthos [different poses of the character and their costume and equipment], interiors and exteriors, posters, murals and paintings that'll be placed directly onto the in-game walls."

LIVE CHANGES

The next stage occurs when the team has a working, playable version of the game and it's one of the uniquely important phases, explains Kan. "My task is to go through the levels, make a few screenshots and then paint over possible improvements, which mostly involve light arrangement or adding architectural elements."

MARKETING

"The final phase of my work on the game is marketing," says Kan. More often these days, a concept artist's job extends beyond the game's development and into the marketing phase. "Nowadays it's important to create a buzz with the teasing concept art," says Kan about a side of the process that's become big business and turned concepts into valued art.

THE STUDIO
Rockstead was designed with an open-plan studio and encourages its artists to mix with designers, programmers and marketing teams.

INTERVIEW WITH
DAVID HEGO

The art director behind Batman: Arkham City reveals what it takes to lead an art team, what he looks for in new artists and how he reimagined an iconic comic world

What are the responsibilities of an art director?
My responsibilities are to make sure that everything seen on the screen is as good as possible! This means working on all the different levels of production: first with the concept artists to create the vision of the game and then with the character, environment, lighting, prop, UI and VFX artists and lead artists to ensure all the elements created and put together follow this vision.

From time to time I also like to be hands-on in the game and work directly on an element, such as the front-end visuals of Batman: Arkham City. But it's sometimes tricky to do this because it's time-consuming and you don't want to lose the global vision of the art.

What do you look for in new artists?
Exciting portfolios! We're very picky at Rocksteady and it could take us a long time to find a new artist to hire. We often hire senior artists, but it's not uncommon to hire a more junior artist who shows potential and is particularly skilled. I like portfolios with a wide range of work – it makes it easier to gauge the potential of an artist – but sometimes just one piece is enough to make a decision about interviewing or hiring an artist.

How hard is it to put your stamp on a licenced game like Batman?
At first, it's quite overwhelming because Batman is a huge licence, always counted as one of the most-liked superheroes by the fans and even the public. There was a lot of pressure when we worked on Batman: Arkham Asylum, because people were wondering where we came from and what we were going to do to the licence. And then there was even more pressure working on Batman: Arkham City. This time people were watching us to see if we could do even better than the first one, and that's what we did!

We're working very closely with DC and WildStorm, especially on the characters, and I have to say that the collaboration has been brilliant: bouncing ideas to each other and exploring what we could add to such well-known characters in the popular culture. It was truly a great experience.

Is there a Rocksteady look? How does the technology define a game's visuals?
There's definitely a Rocksteady look. We've created our own version of the Batman universe: we call it the Arkhamverse. In a few words, the look can be explained in clashing hyper-realism and stylisation:

hyper-realism in the treatment of the textures, shaders and lighting, putting as much detail as possible in the characters and the environment. And stylisation in the way we design the characters, with interesting silhouettes and slightly exaggerated features to make them more interesting, and to stay away from the uncanny valley, too. The same goes for the environment, with a use of strong architectural influences through Gothic, Victorian and Art Nouveau. It's fascinating to explore real-world architectural movements when you're creating a fantastical world.

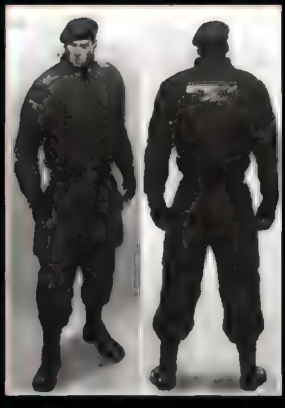
What are the driving principles behind running an art team?
We have several pillars here at Rocksteady that we keep reminding ourselves while working on the project. The first one is quality of quantity. The idea is to make sure that we don't overdo anything and push ourselves against the wall by creating unrealistic schedules. It's important to keep the scope realistic. The second one is attention to detail. In Arkham Asylum and Arkham City, we spent a lot of time and love to make sure that every square metre of the game world is filled with Batman's DNA, and this I think makes a big difference at the end when you play the game. And the last one encompasses polish, optimise, debug, rinse and repeat. We spend a lot of time at the end of the production line to make sure that the game is as polished as possible. Gameplay is king, and we have to make sure that the art deserves the gameplay and the narration, to create the best experience for the player.

What's the biggest challenge facing Rocksteady, and what solutions do you have?
Through the two Batman games Rocksteady reached the top tier of video game developers. Our challenge is our next game; we're aiming to keep delivering better and better experiences to the player, and my duty is to make sure that we'll hit new heights in the visual narration and craft in all aspects of the art.

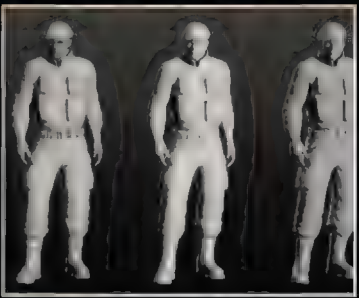
How do you ensure that there's continuity in all aspects of a game's art and production?
We work very closely with the art producer and the art leads, ensuring that the project is ambitious but realistic at the same time in terms of resources and schedule. The continuity of all the aspects of the art comes through meetings and reviews of the work, and by having a fantastic team of skilled and passionate artists. Nothing is possible without a team of amazing artists like we have at Rocksteady.

David has been with Rocksteady since the studio launched and has almost 20 years' experience in the video games industry.

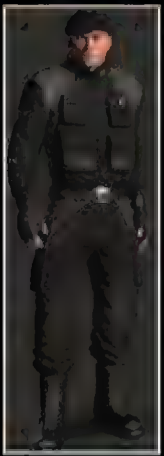
PIECING IT TOGETHER What does it take to design a character?



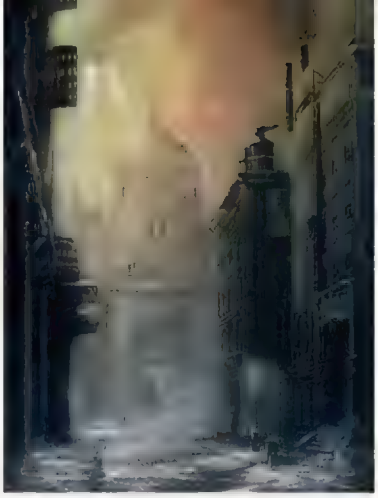
SKETCH
Kan and the concept team put together sketches and orthos of characters to appear in the game.



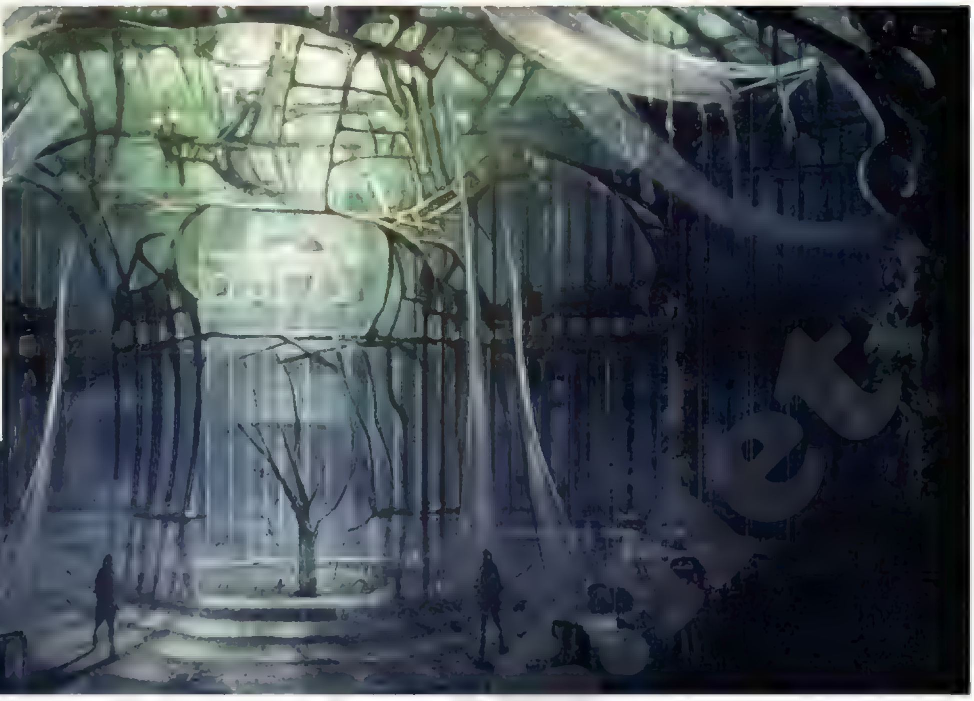
MODELS
The 3D models are made based on the concept art, and the design is tweaked to account for specific gameplay requirements when needed.



REFINEMENTS
The final model is given back to the concept team to go over, and it adjusts the colours, lighting and gestures.



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
Mood pieces such as this from the player's eye view help the level designers create the world of Arkham City.



DODO LE GRANDE
Mixing Art Deco, Victorian design and more modern structures, Kan Muftic says he often feels like an engineer as much as an artist.

ideas to the fore that inspire gameplay. "I spend a lot of time talking, consulting and suggesting things to people in the team… it's not all about the drawing."

This particular way of working is encouraged at Rocksteady. The company was founded in 2004 by two legends of the UK games industry, Jamie Walker and Sefton Hill, in a converted warehouse in Highgate, north London. The open plan, plant-filled studio space encourages the art department to mingle with other departments within the studio and react to new ideas. "In a company like Rocksteady you all work together as a team," says Lee.

Entering this thriving team environment is concept art intern Oliver Odmark.

Interning at a studio such as Rocksteady is standard practice in America, and one that's fast gaining traction here in the UK. Gaining practical experience is vital to break into the industry, and Oliver, who has been studying at Playground Squad in Falun, Sweden, is "super excited" to be learning new skills at Rocksteady. Although his course is in 3D design, he's spent all his free time painting digitally, with the goal to become a concept artist.

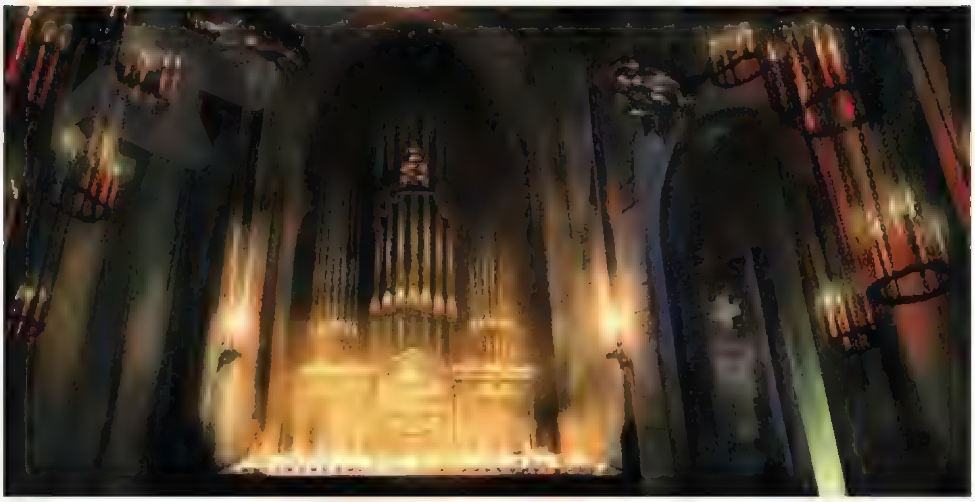
> "The things Kan and Lee teach me are more valuable than what I could learn from any art or game-dev school"

"I try to learn as much as I can with, and in between, every assignment," says Oliver, revealing that getting an internship is just the first step. How an intern reacts to the opportunity is important, because there's always a new task to learn from and the chance to develop key professional skills. "The things Kan and Lee teach me are more valuable than what I could learn from any art or game-dev school," he says.

LEARNING FROM THE BEST

Securing an internship means you can learn on the job from some from the best artists in the industry. "It's important as a concept artist to practise and improve your skills," says Lee, stressing the need to make the most of every opportunity at a studio like Rocksteady to continuously push for new challenges. "Since I started at Rocksteady I've been more active in my art than ever before," says Oliver, explaining how interning at Rocksteady is an intense experience. "The biggest challenge so far has been to keep going after work hours. I draw and paint all day and then go in for another couple of hours of still-life drawing when I get home."

To succeed at a studio like Rocksteady, or as a concept artist in the wider sense, it's a case of being all things to all people. You must be competitive but team spirited, you need to be creative but analytical, you must be a workaholic but recognise when it's time to recharge. You need an art education and work experience. Above all, you need to be better than you were the day before. On the plus side, you may end up painting Batman for a living.



CHURCH INTERIOR
You may have ambitions of creating the next Alien, but as Kan Muftic reveals, concept artists need to be able to visualise everyday environments, too.

Turn to page 98 to see Kan Muftic paint a Batman character in a different light.

Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: ARCTIC DELIVERY MECH

Studying and working with Red Engine Studio's John Park inspired **Chris Armstrong** to put together a novel mech design for a rather unusual role: extreme pizza delivery...

Artist PROFILE

Chris Armstrong

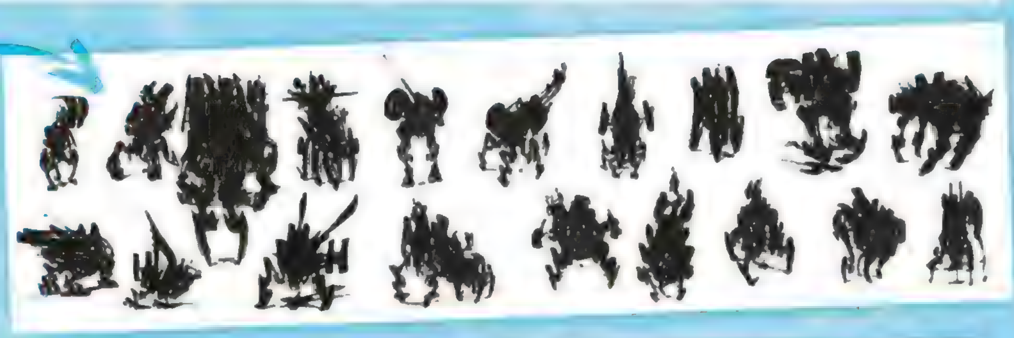
Country: US

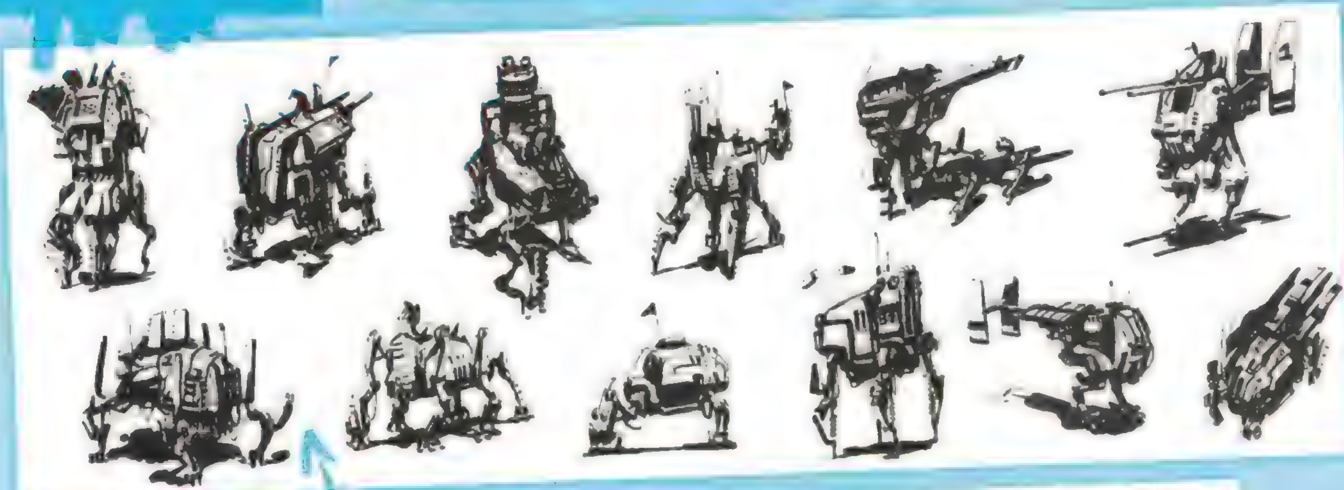
Chris is studying at the Art Center College of Design in California and wants to secure a job in the concept art industry. As well as his studies, Chris also works as a teaching assistant in John Park's Vehicle and Mech Design For Entertainment class at Red Engine Studios, Los Angeles.

www.chrisarm.cghub.com

Thumbnails and blocking

These marker block-outs are the first stage in the design process for the mech. In these thumbnails I'm trying to work out interesting visual shapes while also thinking about functional characteristics and backstories of each design. I treat this as a brainstorming phase without a concrete idea of what I want the design to be. This works great for letting ideas flow subconsciously without preconceptions. Many of these designs have stances and proportions similar to animals and nature



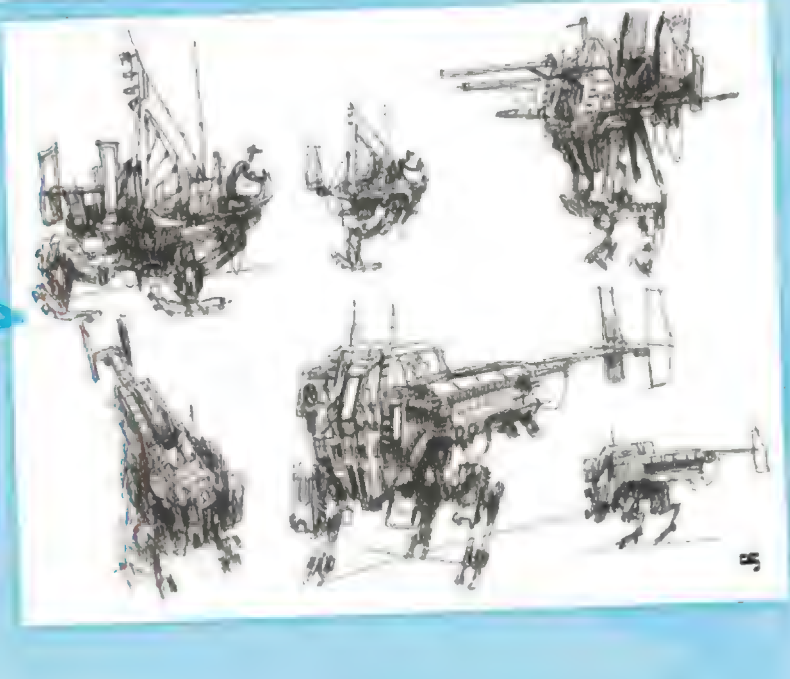


Devise a purpose

[illegible] of what I want the mech to be used for, I choose a pizza delivery mech for high-altitude conditions, such as mountain climbers who want a couple of slices on the top of Mount Everest! I try to have a strong story behind everything I do: this makes it much easier to guide the design and create something interesting and new

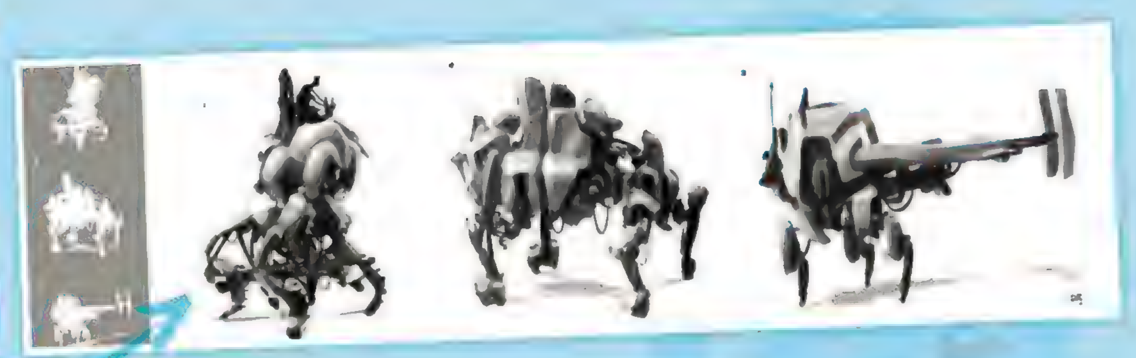
Explore the mechanics

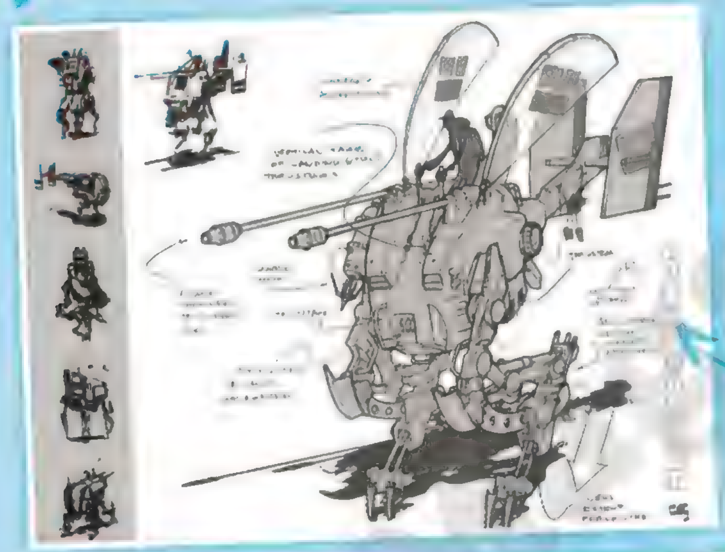
This next stage is really rough. In these pen sketches I'm exploring climbing and flying capabilities. I'm trying to figure out some of the functions and mechanics of the mech, and also ways to brand the mech, like those taxi-like Pizza Hut or Dominos signs on top of delivery trucks. Here I'm also trying to establish details in multiple viewpoints, to make sure the design looks good from every angle, or 'design 360'



Reworking the design

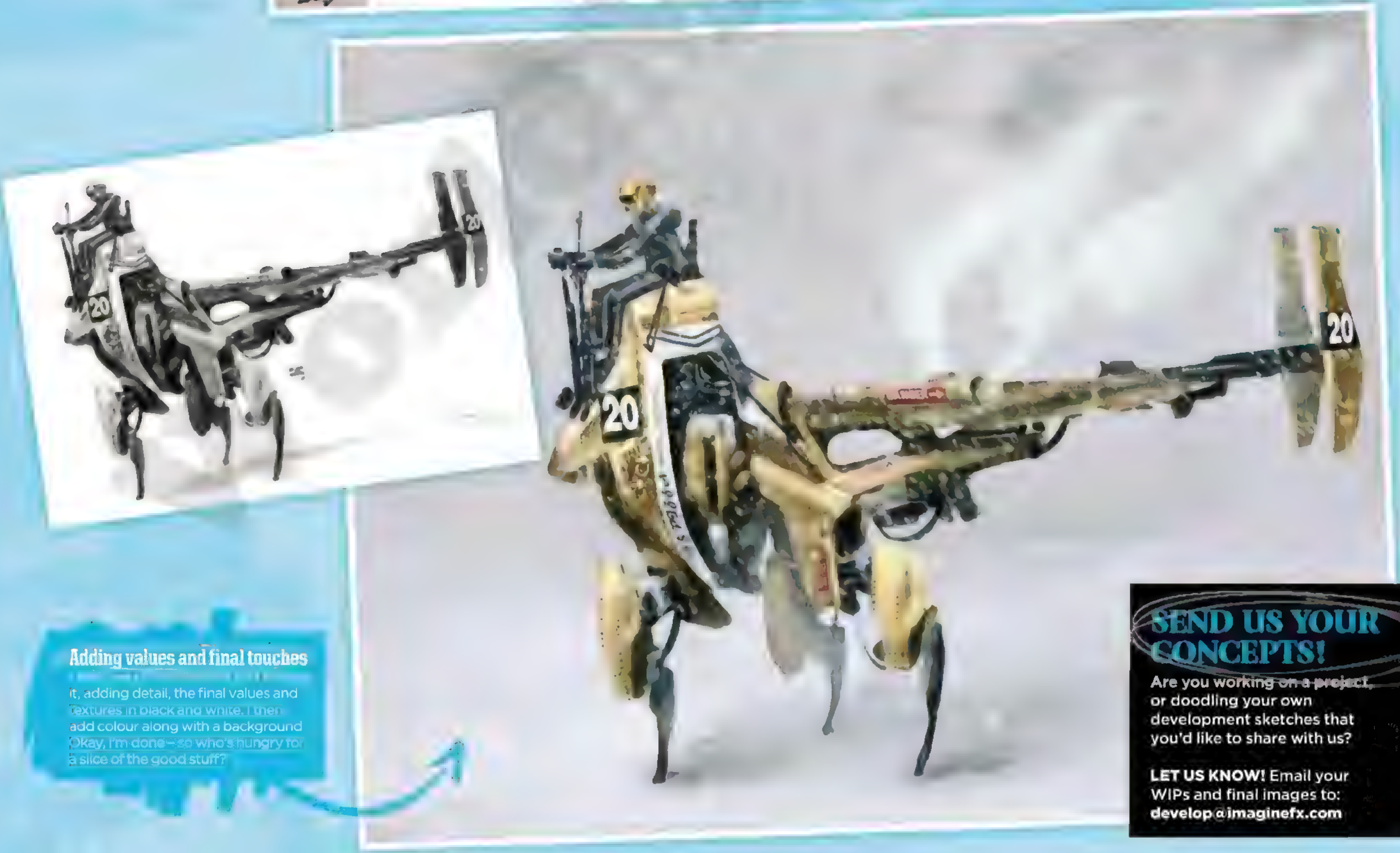
I'm not happy with the silhouette and proportions of my line drawing, so I decide to go back and explore interesting values and graphics directly on some of my favourite silhouettes. Here I've taken rough silhouettes and painted values on top, trying to come up with interesting graphic elements while fleshing out functionality. I choose silhouette number three because it looks and feels the most suitable for high-altitude conditions.





Working up a design

I take my chosen values sketch and move into a tight line drawing. The timer in the middle displays a '30 minute or less or it's free' guarantee. The legs are inspired by adjustable weight-lifting benches. A grapple gun aids climbing, and flame torches help to clear icy conditions. Branding flags advertise the delivery company.



Adding values and final touches

[illegible] it, adding detail, the final values and textures in black and white. I then add colour along with a background. Okay, I'm done – so who's hungry for a slice of the good stuff?

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FXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

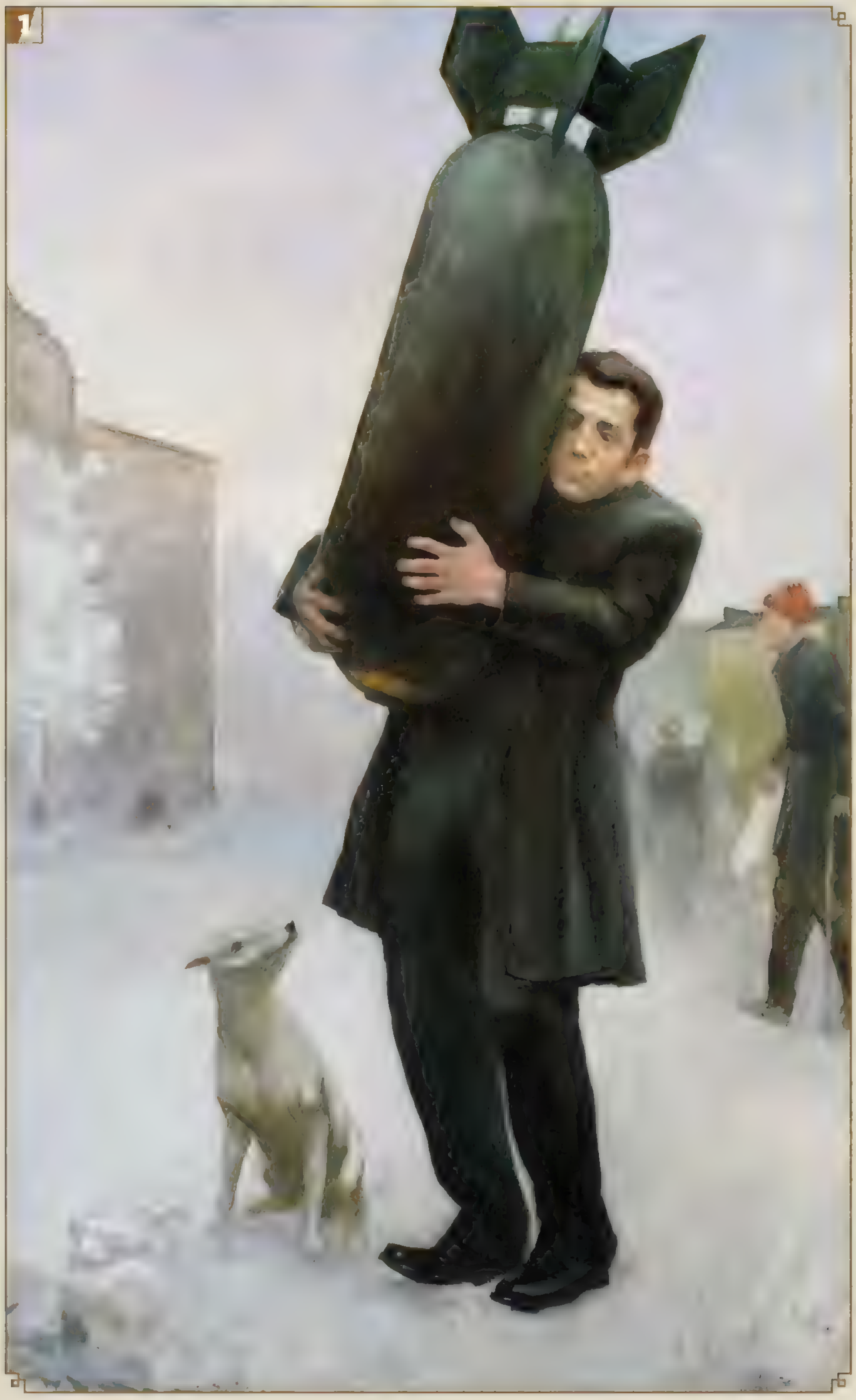
Antti Pesonen

LOCATION: Finland
WEB: anttiart.blogspot.com
EMAIL: antti.pesonen@gmail.com
MEDIA: Oils

"While I appreciate and strive towards good craftsmanship, the most important things for me about art nowadays are story and mood," says Antti, and you can learn as much from a look at this selection of his work.

When the Finnish painter began studying he was primarily focused on the technical side of things: "How to render form, anatomy and all that," he tells us. "Ironically, the art school I was in at the time concentrated a lot more on the 'why' and 'what' of art rather than answering the question 'how'." The combination seemed to work for the young artist.

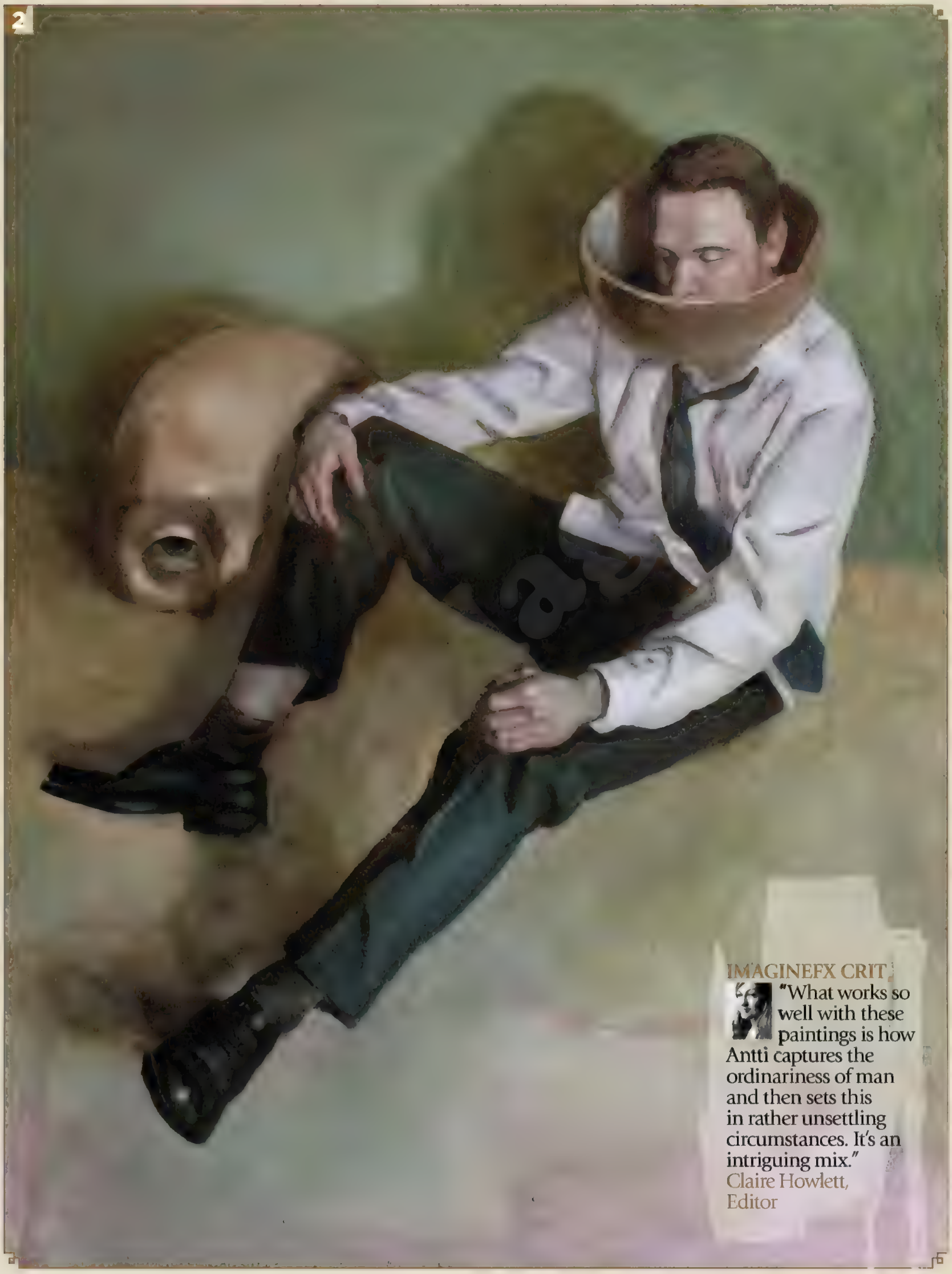
Antti is a game artist at Grand Cru games in Helsinki, and works on oil paintings in his spare time.



1 ATLAS
120x170cm, oil on canvas
"This is the largest painting I've done. It's fun to work on an image this size, but this presents its own challenges. It definitely becomes a more physical experience than working in smaller scale or digitally."

2 DESCENT
80x100cm, oil on canvas.
"This is a companion piece to The Ascension, another of my works, and I think the narrative in this one is less vague. There is a man sitting next to a wall, not looking too cheery. That's about all there is to it."

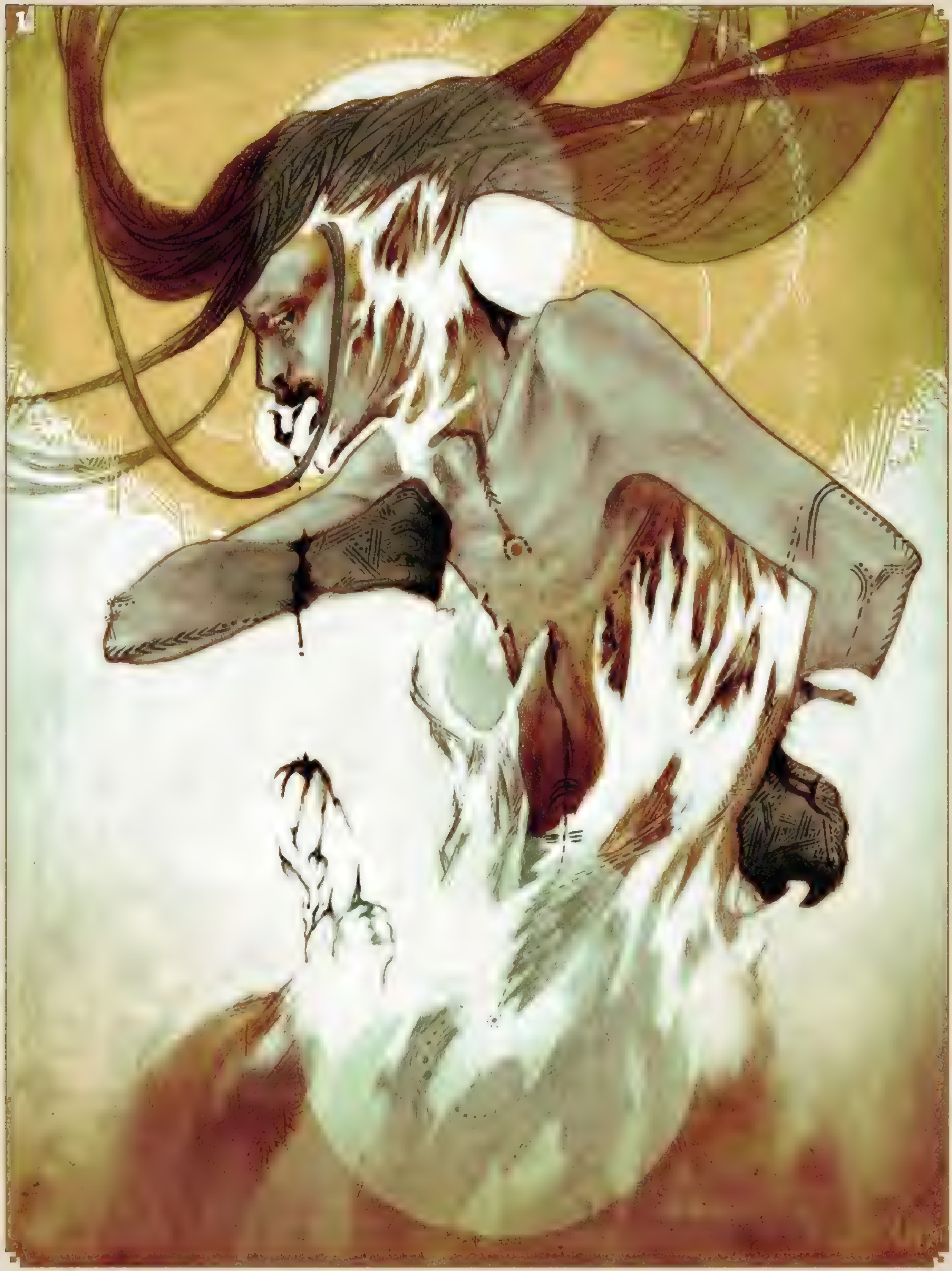
2

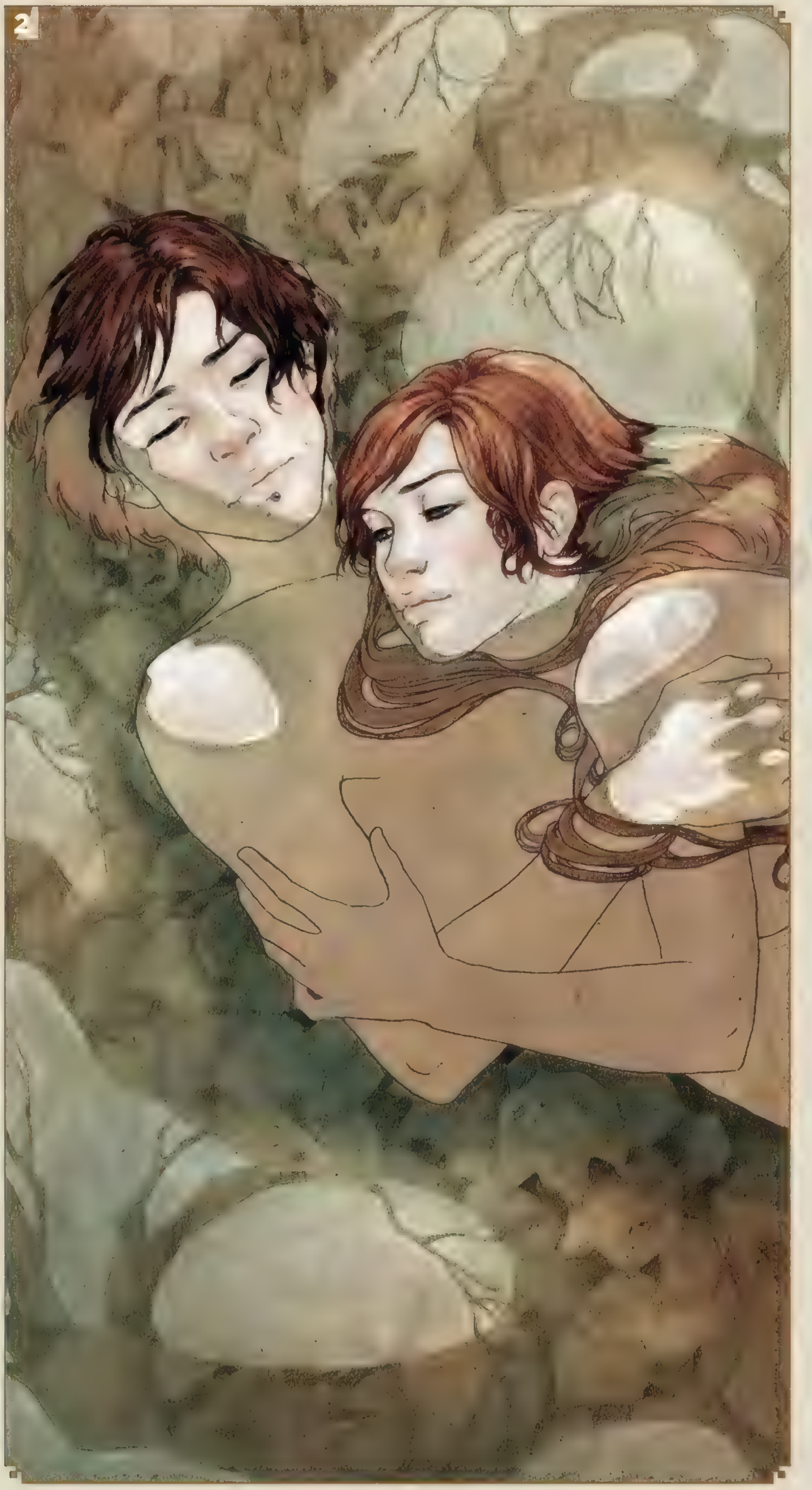


IMAGINEFX CRIT

"What works so well with these paintings is how Antti captures the ordinariness of man and then sets this in rather unsettling circumstances. It's an intriguing mix."
Claire Howlett, Editor

1





2

Asher Dumonchelle

US
www.dumonchelledraws.com
asher@dumonchelledraws.com
Pencil, charcoal

"I've always been interested in visual storytelling," Asher says, "and during my years at the Maryland Institute of Art I was nudged in the direction of illustration. That was the beginning for me."

Asher graduated in 2009 and was soon picked to work on the game Marian and the Fantastic World of Dreams with Alec Holowka, the creator of the award-winning game Aquaria. "I worked on Marian for two years, and the final year I was sole artist on the project," says a clearly pleased Asher.

1 **ANTIGEN**
9x12in, graphite powder and pencils
"This piece is from my series on depicting indescribable feelings. Antigen is based on the emotion invoked by assimilation and peer pressure – the idea that one's individuality is being forced into remission. My intention was assimilation in association with gender and how one presents oneself."

2 **LET US GO THEN**
20x11in, pencils and white charcoal
"This piece's imagery was inspired by the poem Lovesong of J Alfred Prufroc by T.S. Eliot. I used my own narrative to conceptualise imagery within the poem. My personal narratives have their own season and colour associations. In this case the theme in general was autumn, which is a prominent theme at the close of the poem as well."

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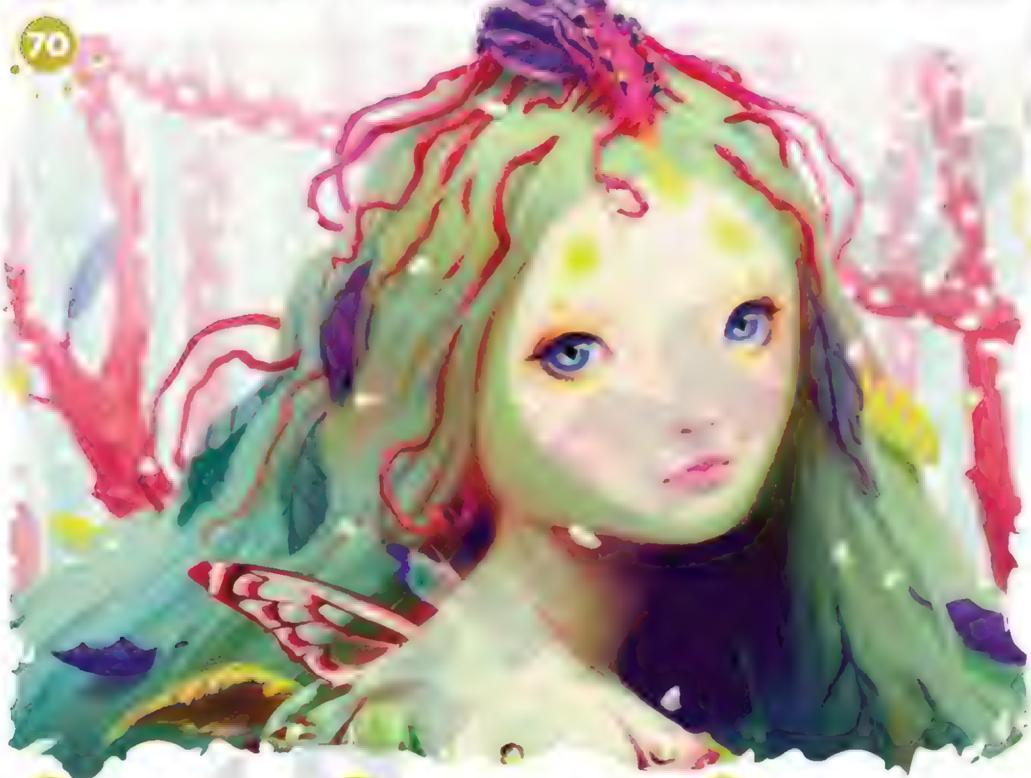

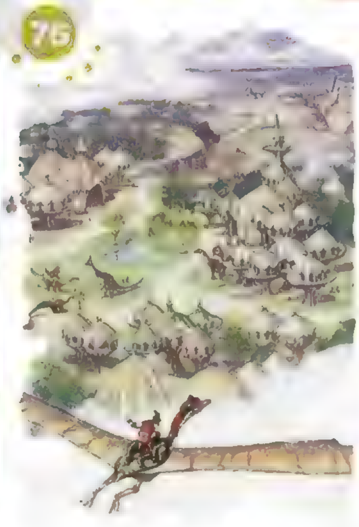

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Bao Pham sifts through the chaos to create something beautiful and strange.

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Derick Tsai stages a fight between two warrior races.

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Dinotopia mastermind James Gurney shares his world-building strategies.

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Charlie Bowater injects new life into old linework.

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Karlsimon shows you how iPad painting can help feed your imagination.

92 Preparing your sketch for paint
Discover a fast way to mount your sketch to a paintable surface, with Terese Nielsen.

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It's not just about the pretty pictures, says John Howe.

98 Recast a classic comic character
Kan Muftic paints DC villain Harley Quinn.

Photoshop

TURN A NEBULOUS VISION INTO ART

Bao Pham starts out with chaos and then carefully sifts through the debris of ideas to create something beautiful, strange and enchanting

Artist **PROFILE**

Bao Pham

COUNTRY: US

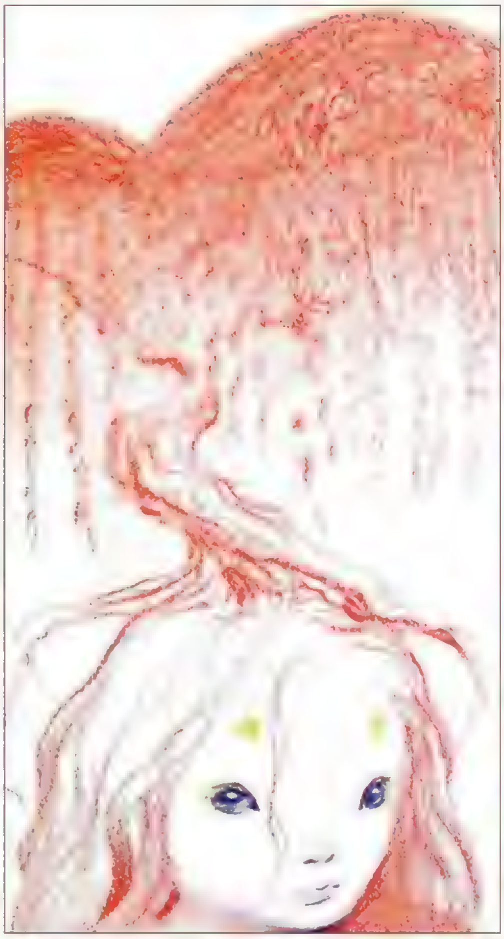
Bao is a painter working with traditional and digital media. His digital work stays within the fantasy genre and features the occasional gore. When working with traditional media, he likes to paint from life and record it as accurately as possible.

www.baophamart.com

Before starting a piece it's usually a good idea to have, well, a good idea. However, sometimes I like jumping into a painting head first: no sketches, no value studies, no colour studies and no plan of attack. All I've got is a vague and distant vision of the finished painting. The process can be difficult and frustrating, and more often than not I end up abandoning it and move on to something else. Yet the ideas that maintain my interest become that special something I was searching for all along.

It's certainly not for everyone, but for a while now this has been my painting process. At least, in the digital realm. The difficulties and frustration tend to multiply when I work traditionally. But that's the beauty of digital painting: it enables me to make my mistakes and then fix them with a flick of a Wacom stylus.

This workshop will show how I put this approach into practice and the problems I encounter along the way. I'll share the various techniques I use with layers and effects to make the necessary changes when I need to, and how I employ them as safety nets when I don't want to stray too far from my idea. I hope to demonstrate the advantages this way of working can bring, and convey how much more fun it is, compared to painting when you know what you're doing. At the very least, I hope you take something away that you can use in your creative process.

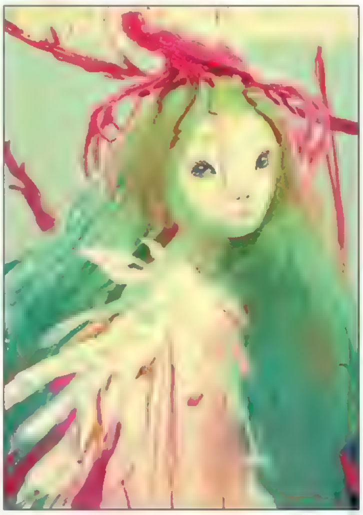


1 Sourcing my idea

It all has to start somewhere, and to help come up with some ideas I leaf through my old sketchbooks. I eventually come across a small sketch of a young girl with a tree growing out of her head. It's not a sketch of anything in particular and I like how it just lingers there, waiting to be taken on a fun ride. I take a quick photo of the sketch and explore the idea further in Photoshop.

2 Deciding on a direction

I set the photo layer to Multiply and add a body with some flat colours. I then surround the neutral flesh tones with two complementary colours: green and pink. The idea of her becoming part of nature comes from the tree and so the direction is established. In turn, a body that's covered in leaves or wings is suggested. The bright, mask-like face highlights her eyes.



PRO SECRETS

Flexibility with layers

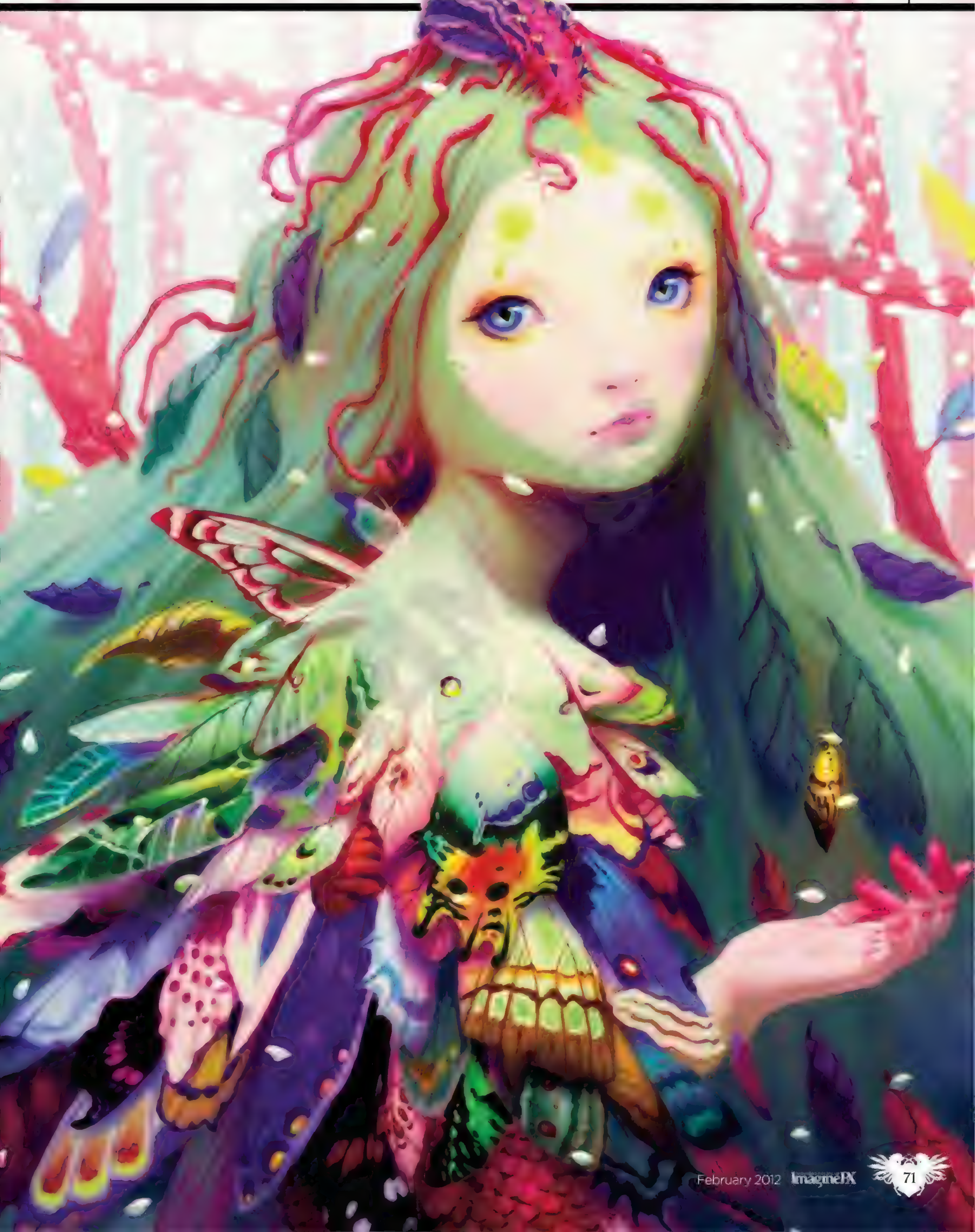
Keep your image adjustments on separate layers by going to Layer>New Adjustment Layer and choosing the desired adjustments. Keeping them separate will give you greater flexibility when layering your effects; you won't have to commit to anything until everything works. The same goes for New Fill Layer, which is handy for adding tints or changing colours. Play with your layer options until you're satisfied.

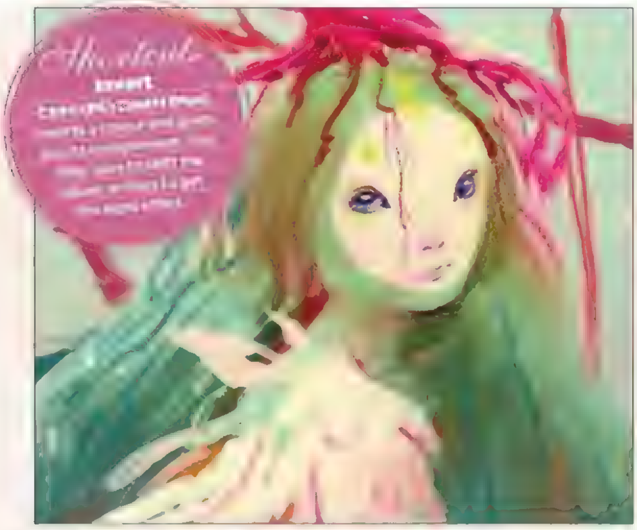
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: CHALK

This was my primary brush for this workshop – I used it for everything, from sketching, to painting and blending. It suits my way of working well.





3 Expand your palette

Starting with a limited colour palette helps me focus on the shapes and how they work as a composition. Once I'm comfortable with the overall composition I start varying the colour temperature within the larger shapes, such as shifting the greens to a cooler turquoise or adding some deep warm reds to the magenta. This is the next step towards creating my palette for the entire painting, which I can do using the Eyedropper tool as I work on the rest of the painting.

4 Defining the shapes

I start cleaning up some of the clutter and clarify the shape of the tree on her head. I paint over the pencil lines to remove the unwanted paper texture. I use the Lasso tool to move her eyes into the correct perspective. I work my way through the painting to find anything that I can build on; I add her hand to help balance out the composition.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

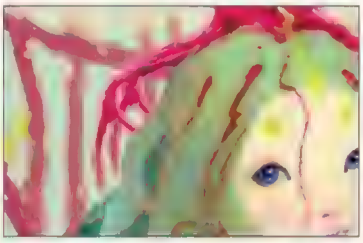
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SPONGE

[illegible]

SOFT ROUND

[illegible]

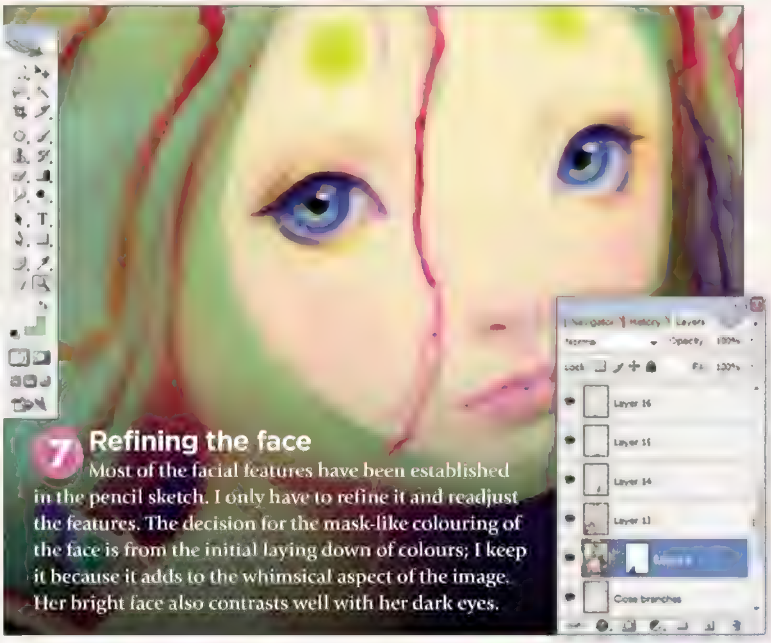


5 Create the setting

Once the main character starts becoming clear, I build on the branches and add a few more to create an interesting setting for her. I'm keeping them pink to connect them with the tree on her head. In addition, there are some hints of falling petals from the white foliage of the tree. This adds to the movement and overall atmosphere of the painting. Because they're smaller details, I'll finish them off later.

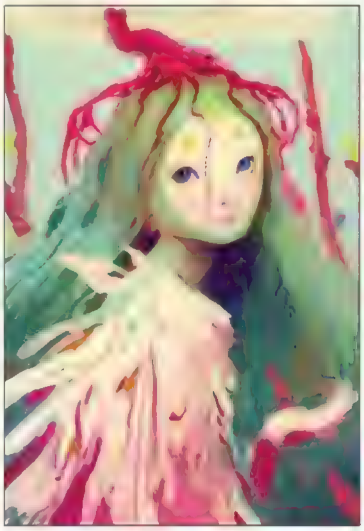
6 Managing layers

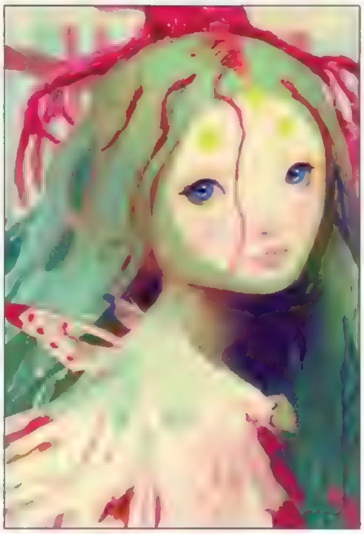
I play it safe by creating a separate layer for each large element. This enables me to edit each element more easily. However, I do restrict the number of layers because I like how the colours move into each other when I paint. I create a new layer for any new idea I want to try out in case it doesn't work out, or need to make changes to the painting.

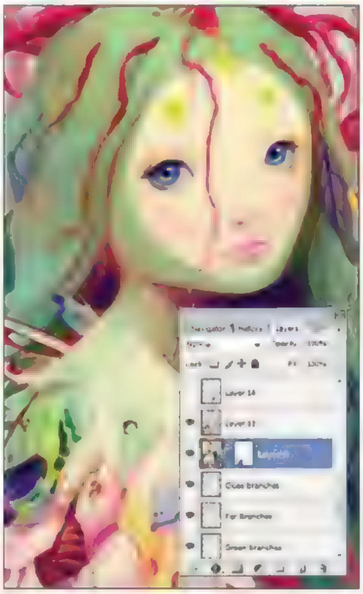


7 Refining the face

Most of the facial features have been established in the pencil sketch. I only have to refine it and readjust the features. The decision for the mask-like colouring of the face is from the initial laying down of colours; I keep it because it adds to the whimsical aspect of the image. Her bright face also contrasts well with her dark eyes.





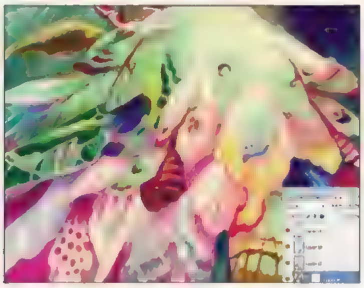


8 Mix it up

Taking cues from the features of her doll-like face, I want the overall setting to be surreal rather than being, say, your average enchanted forest. I want to create a world that's hers and hers alone. It's a mix between the strange and innocent, alien yet fairy-like – such as the juxtaposition of the parasitic, tree-like shape on her head and her butterfly-covered body.

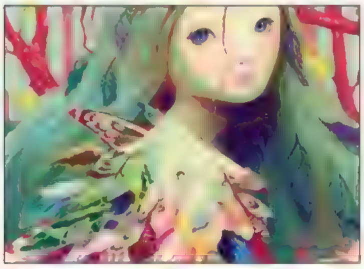
9 Background tweaks

I reshape the tree trunk on her head to make it more dynamic, and I suggest that the hair connects to it like roots. The background trees also receive a quick rendering pass. I keep the values relatively close to each other to suggest distance, and because the light is cool the colours of the branches in the mid-ground are also dialled back.



10 A multitude of wings

Up until now, the wings that cover her body have been suggested with some broad brushstrokes. I start refining them one by one, making decisions about their shapes and colours as I go along. I start out with a large mass, then separate the shapes using shadows. The base colour is laid down first, followed by the veining of the wing, and then finally the patterns.

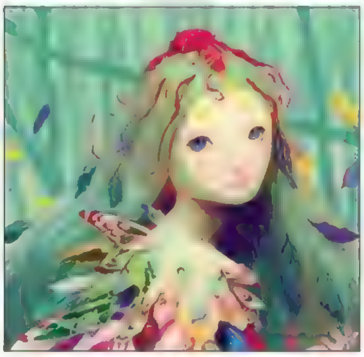


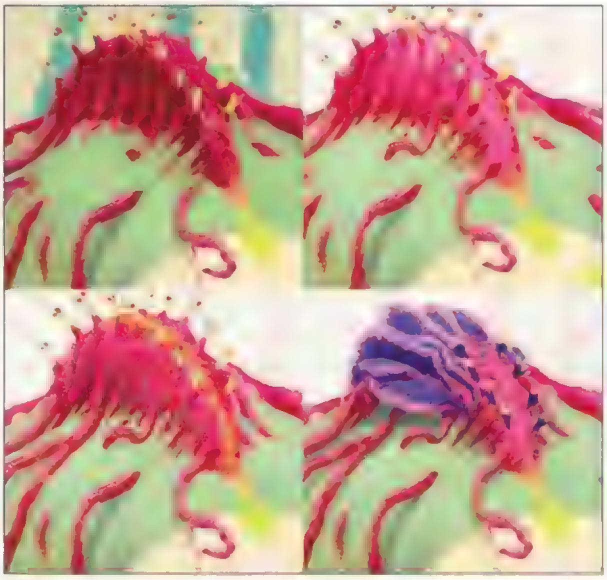
11 Colour grouping

To manage the various patterns, I keep groupings of colours together to preserve their readability. Then, within that grouping, I introduce touches of colours from the other groups, effectively creating a sense of visual cohesion. I also adjust the various patterns for each wing.

12 Big changes

After sending an update, a decision is made by the ImagineFX team to edit the tree on her head to remove any distractions from the ImagineFX logo. Removing the trunk means deleting the foliage as well, and so I extend the trees to fill in the resulting gap. Furthermore, the branches in the background conflict with the coverlines, so I decide to make them green to unify them with the background. These changes are made quickly because each element is on a different layer.





13 More changes

Finally, we decide to keep the colour of the trees, but make them brighter to work with the cover text. However, the maimed tree trunk still needs to be resolved. I play with its shape, making it like a skeletal headdress, then soften it into a caterpillar form, before finally adding petal-like ridges on its back. I like the mixture of different forms in it and it works well with the rest of the image. It looks very parasitic.

14 Brighten things up

To lighten the background and give it an almost foggy, washed-out effect, I create a new layer. I set it to Soft Light and choose a pale green to brighten and cool down the background colours. The same is done with the branches and because they're on their own layers, I make sure to activate Create Clipping Mask to keep the effect isolated to just the branches. Once I'm satisfied with the results, I merge the layers.

Shortcuts
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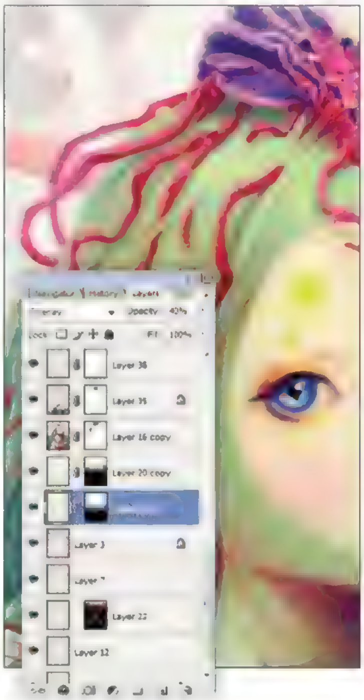
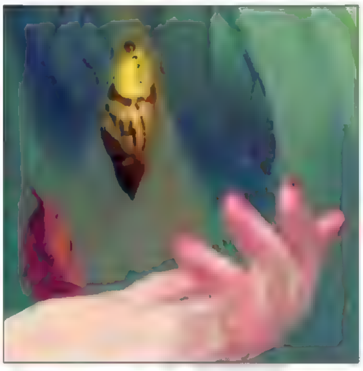
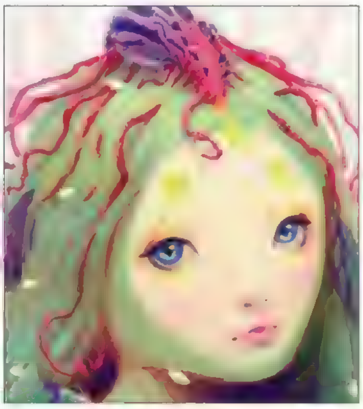




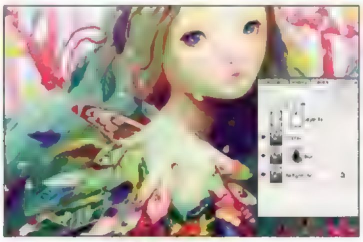
15 Loose ends

For her hand, I reference my own. It's the most convenient source I have and all I need is a mirror. As with all forms, I start with large block-like masses, and slowly smooth them down to represent the fingers and palm, keeping in mind the light source. To play off the idea of butterfly wings, I paint a chrysalis floating in her hand. This adds a small, but much-needed narrative element to the image.



16 Falling petals and other details

The detailing of the wings never stops, but I need to make a start on the rest of the image. I add some leaves to fill in the rest of the empty space, paint petals on the trees and flesh out the falling petals. I also introduce some markings to the tip of her fingers to reference the subtle markings on her face, as well as the patterns of the wings.



17 Finishing up

Finally, I flatten everything and duplicate the layer twice. I blur one layer with Gaussian Blur set to 2 pixels. Then I erase out the parts I want to keep sharp. On the other layer, I set it to 20 pixel Gaussian Blur and put the layer mode to Overlay at 20 per cent. This adds a glow to the image and deepens the colours, as well as helping to unify the image.

PRO SECRETS

Practise your squint

[illegible] shape, [illegible] mark can [illegible] pattern. Your eyes can be tricked into seeing something that's not there. Shapes merge to become other shapes. It's a great way to [illegible] especially during the sketching stage.

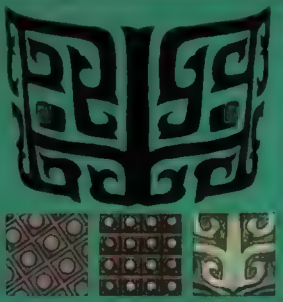
Photoshop

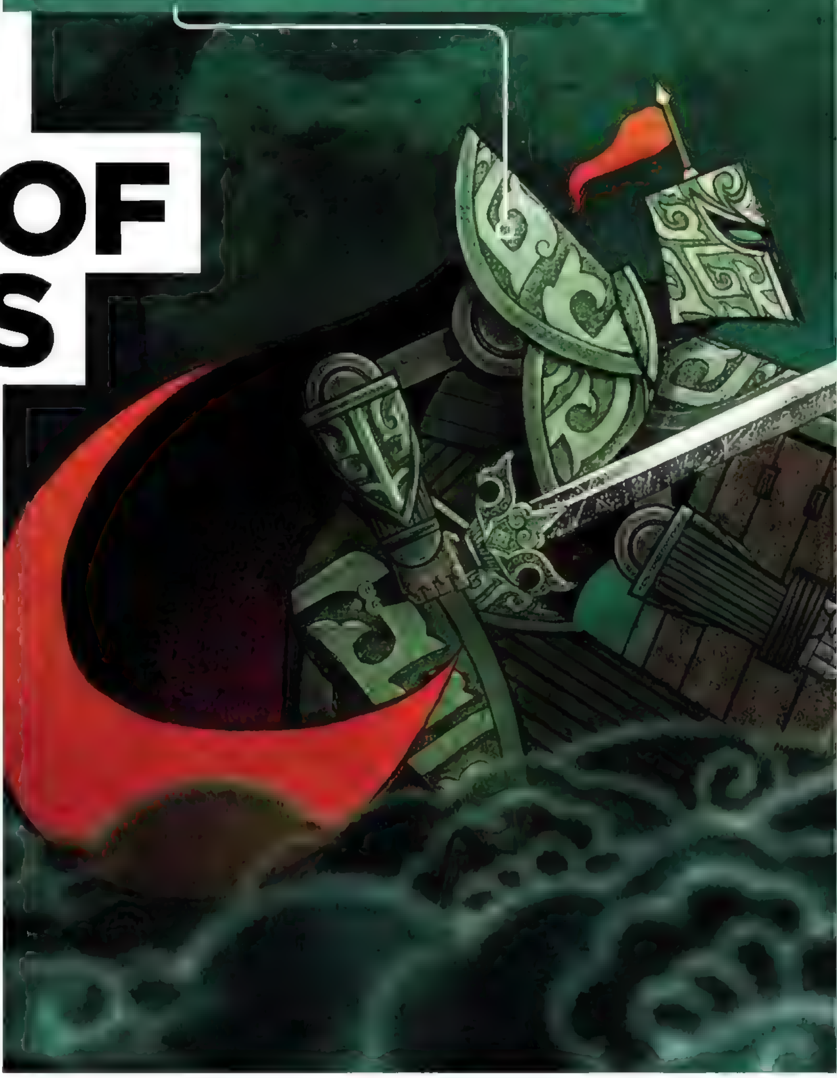
PORTRAY A CLASH OF CULTURES

Derick Tsai pays close attention to the details while staging a fight between two warrior races

The Iron Warrior

This character is from a culture that's the embodiment of nobility and strength. I choose to distinguish this race with this graphic, which I feel visually represents the values of this particular culture. The sword is given a beaten and worn textured feel to suggest how long this warrior has been fighting. To create the textures I scan pictures of old metals and paper that I've collected over the years. I then apply it to the image on either Overlay or Soft Light mode and play with the opacity until I achieve the desired effect.





Artist
PROFILE

Derick Tsai

COUNTRY: [illegible]

[illegible]

www.[illegible].com

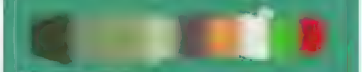
This piece, titled King Of The Mountain, was created for my original project, Mythika Prime. The theme I wanted to convey here was that of conflict: two warriors from opposing cultures are about to wage a brutal battle to claim territory – as well as eternal bragging rights.

When designing races and cultures I believe it's effective to think of each faction as a value statement for a quick and powerful read. For example, the left-hand character is part of The Iron Warriors. This faction represents strength and stability; they're a group of soldiers who roam the world of Pangea helping those in need. That value statement is expressed in the strong shapes and graphics used in their culture. In contrast, the Warlord and his Marauder culture (over on the right) is the embodiment of wrath and violence, and this is reflected in the twisted and gnarled shapes used in his design.

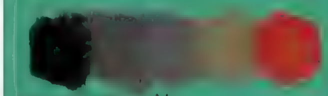
Attention is paid to differentiating the different cultures from each other through the use of iconic graphic motifs, colour and texture, while still having it feel cohesive as a self-contained world. After the design language is worked out for each culture, the puppet characters are then posed and combined in the scene with environmental elements, and effects are used to reinforce the designs of each character. ●

Colour palette

[illegible]



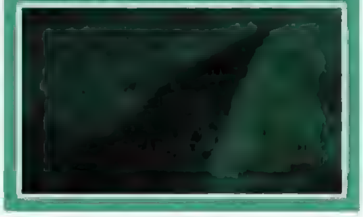
The Iron Warriors

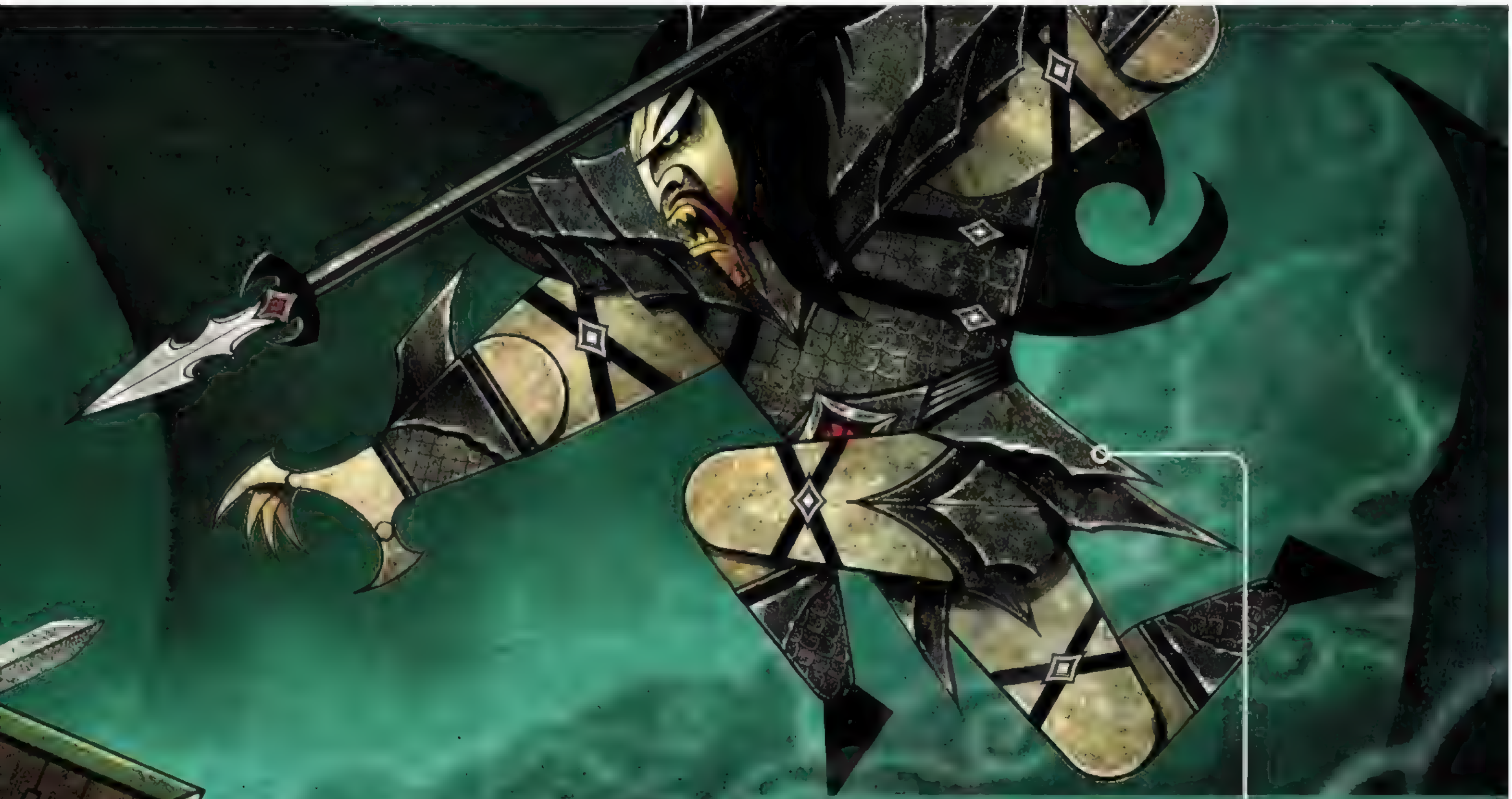


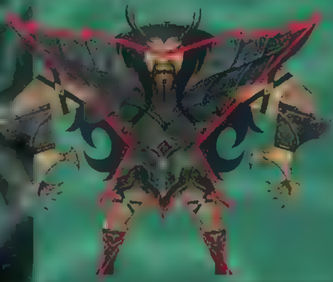
The Marauders

The environment

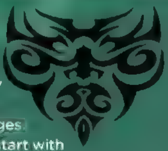
[illegible]







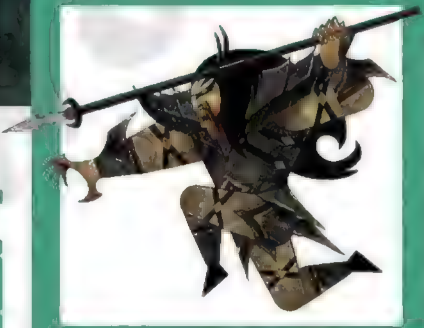
The Warlord



This character's faction, the Marauders, is harsh by nature. Their design is characterised by this graphic, which resembles twisted shrapnel with sharp edges. When designing the graphic, I start with a line drawing, fill it with flat colour and then add the appropriate lighting for the material I'm trying to simulate. I finish by adding various textures for additional visual interest. To further emphasise this faction's war-like nature, they're clad in scales and wear brutally jagged armour.

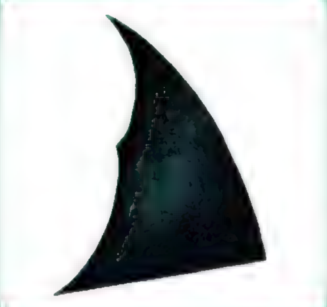
How I create...

A BATTLE ON A MISTY MOUNTAIN



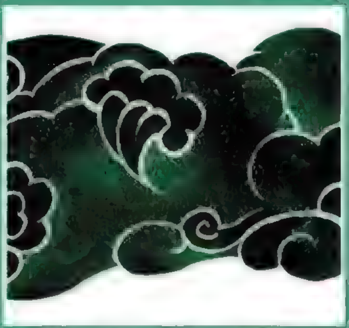
1 Character poses

This scene is composed in a spontaneous matter without a sketch. I have a rough idea of what I want so I basically start posing my two side-view puppets, until they're arranged in a circular composition with a clear antagonistic relationship towards one another.



2 Mountain shapes

The jagged mountains are basically one solid shape repeated three times with different texture applications and slight distortions. It's amazing how much spatial depth you can suggest using just bold graphic shapes, texture, atmosphere and the sharpness of edges.



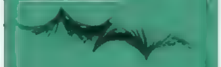
3 Ominous clouds

I create the roll of clouds by cloning one cloud shape and then repeating it over and over again, reducing the scale and blurring the edges to create a sense of depth. It's a very stylised look and suits my purposes here, but the effect can used in regular paintings, too.

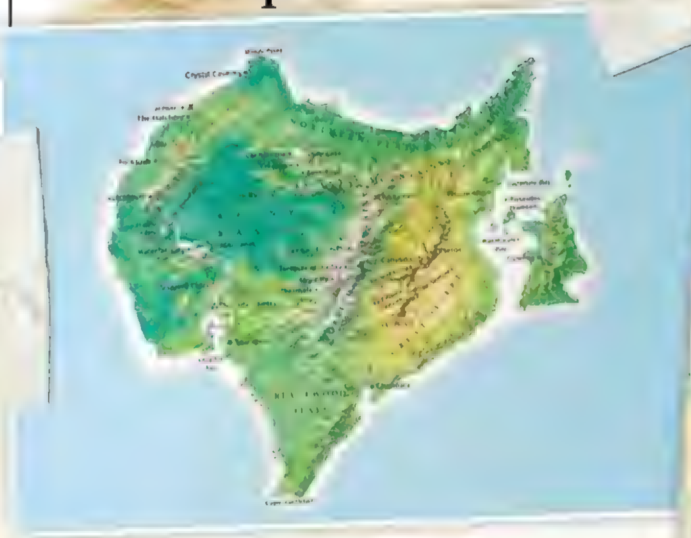
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

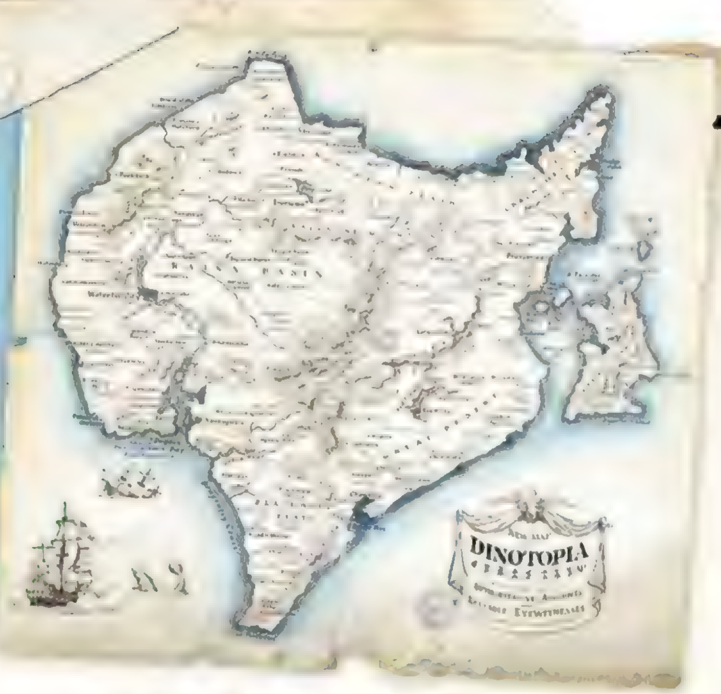
PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: TEXTURIZER



I used this custom brush along with metallic textures to create the characters' general wear and tear.





Artist insight

PRESENTING THE LAY OF THE LAND

James Gurney, the mastermind behind Dinotopia, shares some of his world-building strategies to help put your fantasy universe on the map

Artist **PROFILE**

James Gurney

COUNTRY: US

James created Dinotopia 20 years ago, after working for a decade reconstructing ancient civilisations and dinosaurs for National Geographic. Since then he's produced three more books in the series, [illegible] original volume with a 32-page "Making of..." afterword, featuring sketches, maquettes and unseen art.

www.bit.ly/jgurney

If you want to build your paintings into a coherent fantasy universe, then it helps to spend time drawing up maps, overviews and cutaways. These three strategies of visual development enable you to pull back and show how various elements are related spatially. Creating these images will give your world more plausibility and touch off an avalanche of other ideas.

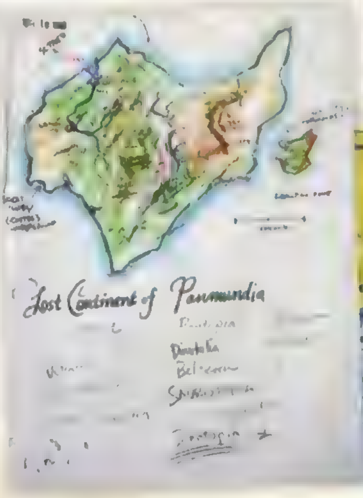
Maps were what kick-started Dinotopia. I'd painted about five disconnected "lost empire" panoramas in the late 1980s, only one of which showed people and dinosaurs together. I still had no inkling of Dinotopia. The catalyst was drawing a quick map of the island. The map led to the idea of an explorer's narrative set in the 19th century. Soon I was deep into storyboarding and writing the 160-page book, and the rest is history – or alternative history, if you will.

> "You'll be able to show how elements are related spatially"

Here are 25 suggestions to help you plan your voyage into the wilds of your imagination. Let's get going…

1 BEGIN WITH LOOSE DOODLES

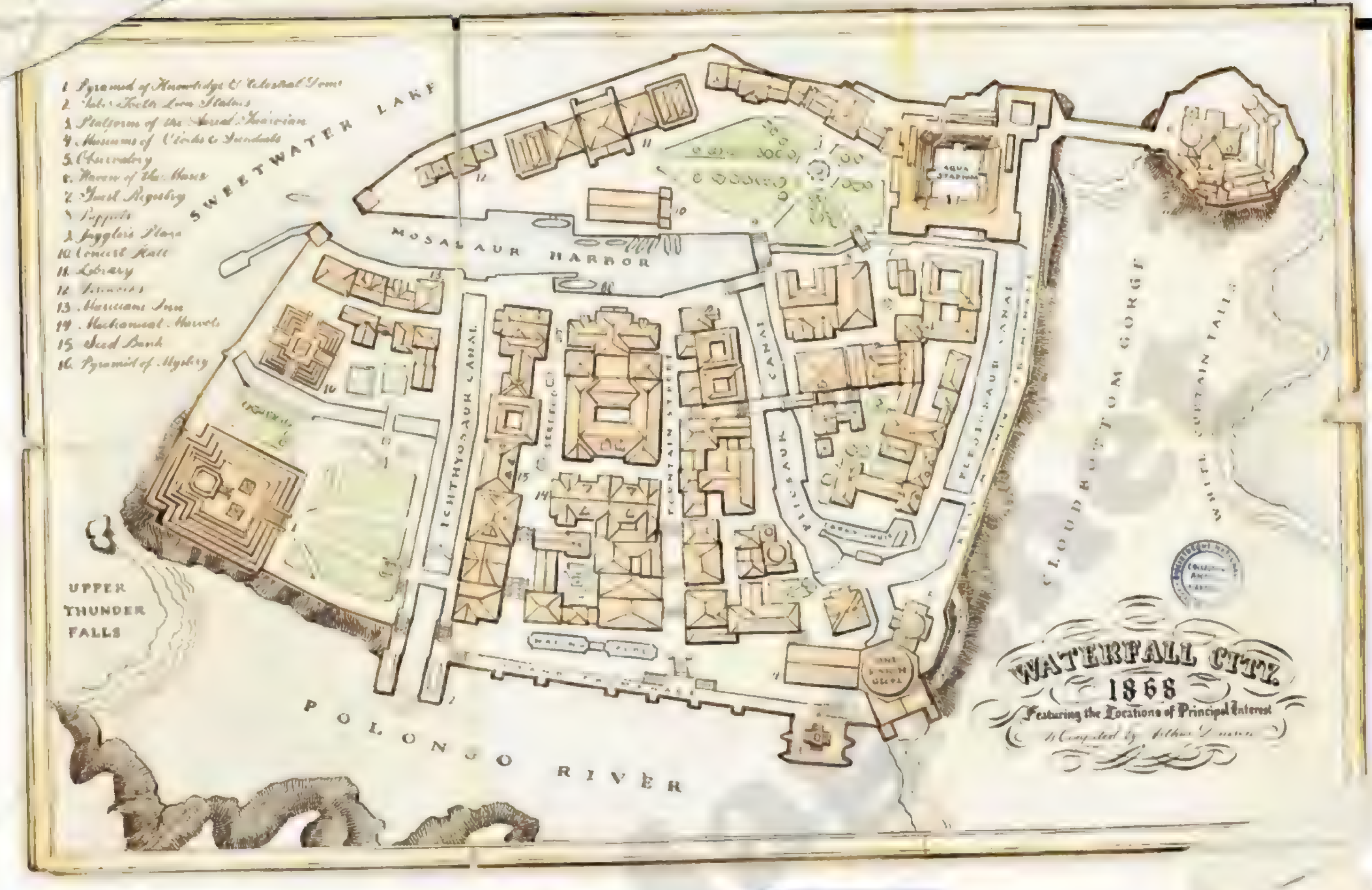
I drew the first map of Dinotopia with coloured pencils and markers. Different colours suggested different environments. The shape was somewhat random, but it resembled an upside-down version of Australia. In a practical sense, I wanted to be sure the island could easily fit onto a square page. I scribbled names for the land – Panmundia, Belterra and Saurotopia – before I came up with the name that stuck.


Lost Continent of Panmundia
Dinotopia
Belterra

2 CONSIDER THE RANGE OF ENVIRONMENTS

When I did my first rendering of the Dinotopia map, I wanted to concentrate on the physical geography, especially topography and vegetation. The goal was to include a variety of environments on one map: jungles, rivers, canyons, mountains and plains. I suspected that I'd be living on this island for a while, so I thought I'd better have plenty of areas to explore later in case I developed other stories within the same world. If you make the whole planet an ice planet, be sure you're prepared to go for years without seeing the colour green!

Chapman's Island
Polongo River
Grand Island
Baru
Bellhaus
Paleopolis
Placoderm Island
SAUROPOLIS
(Monument Caverns)
The Sunken Diamond Caves
(Western Doorway)
Dolphin Bay
Black Fish Tavern
The Pinnacles
Attack by Dunkleosteus
Gold Digger Trench
Devonian Gardens
MESOSAURUS BASIN

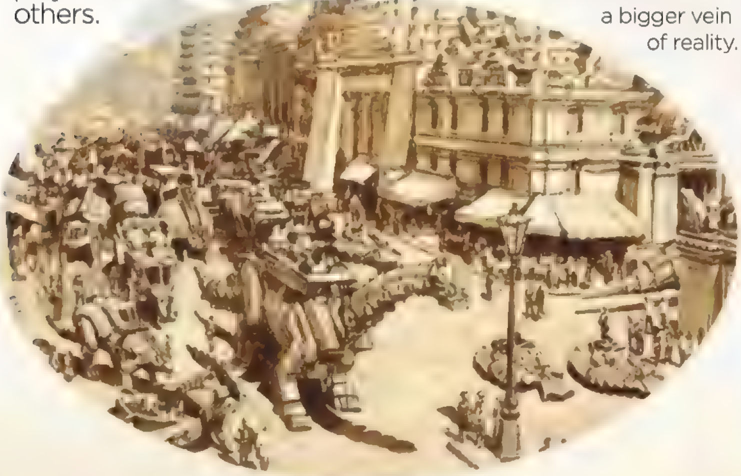

5 Observatory
10 Concert Hall
11 Library
14 Mechanical Marvels
15 Seed Bank
16 Pyramid of Mystery
SWEETWATER LAKE
MOSASAUR HARBOR
AQUA STATION
ICHTHYOSAUR CANAL
FOUNTAIN STREET
CANAL
PLIOSAUR
PLESIOSAUR CANAL
CLOUDBOTTOM GORGE
WHITE CURTAIN FALLS
UPPER THUNDER FALLS
POLONGO RIVER
WATERFALL CITY
1868
Featuring the Locations of Principal Interest

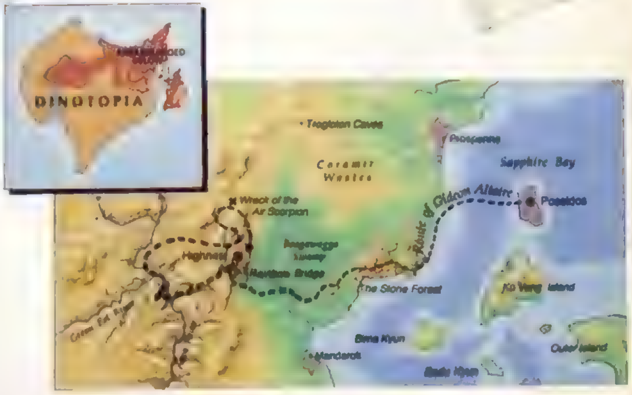
3 SHOW ONLY WHAT YOU WANT TO SHOW

Maps can describe different aspects of your world: roads, topography, history or settlement patterns. However, you can't show everything on one map, so you need to decide what's the most important. You may want to show the tide of battles, or the route of an explorer. You can also reveal the shape of the sea floor. Play up key aspects and play down the others.

4 TAKE YOUR WORLD FOR GRANTED

Don't think of yourself as "God-the-Creator" of your own world, peopling continents with a wave of your hand. Thinking like that can be intimidating. It's much better to imagine that the world already existed before you got there. You're just the discoverer, or better yet, a lowly transcriber. Adopting this attitude also helps with the pitch later, because it conveys the sense that it's not just you making stuff up. Rather, you're revealing a few nuggets from a bigger vein of reality.




DINOTOPIA
Troglodon Caves
Sapphire Bay
Poseidos
Wreck of the Air Scorpion
Route of Gideon Altaire
The Stone Forest
Ko Vang Island
Bima Kyun
Outer Island

5 GET RELIEF

For the main map of Dinotopia, I referenced the hand-painted National Geographic maps from the 1970s and 1980s, before satellite images became universal. The typical convention for mountain and canyon relief is to emphasise the surface undulations by means of an imaginary light source from the upper left. I rendered the map in semi-transparent oil, but you could construct a map digitally by sampling from real-world topographies.

6 USE A 'LOCATOR' FOR CONTEXT

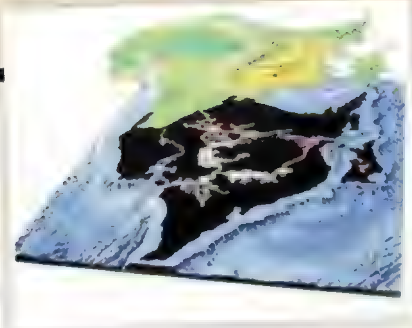
A locator map is set into a larger close-up map to show how the detailed view fits into the larger scheme of things. Keep in mind that a random reader doesn't know your world well, so you have to orient them. The shape of the whole world should be recognisable from a distance.

7 START A COLLECTION OF PLACE NAMES

A single map can eat up a lot of place names. The map in Journey to Chandara has nearly 300 separate names. There were fewer than 50 place names on the original map. I added dozens of new town names, many of them borrowed from obscure words and names that I have been collecting over the years. Word-a-day calendars are a good source for ideas. When you find a good one, just stash it in a 'name envelope'. That's where I got the name Lacuna, which means a gap or cavity.

8 THINK BIG

Add more place names than the ones you're planning to mention in a story. This gives a feeling that the world exists beyond the boundaries of what you've revealed so far. If your world becomes successful, it also gives other creative people something more to work with. For example, on the first map I just stuck a name over the ocean, and wrote Poseidos: Sunken. It became a core destination for a later book.



9 LIFT UP THE SURFACE TO SHOW CAVE WORLDS

If you need to show a cave system, you must find a way to convey the three-dimensional volumes, which extend north to south, east to west and up to down. Because this can be difficult to represent in any 2D projection, you might want to model it digitally in 3D, either for your own reference or for output in animated or interactive displays. For example, for the cave world under Dinotopia I tilted the view in perspective to show the structure beneath.

10 MAKE AN INFORMATION DUMP

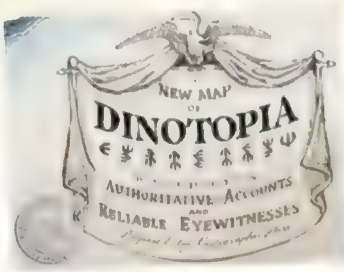
An information dump is any diagram where you cram a wealth of explanatory detail. There can be captions, callouts and elements, all presented with an authoritative tone. The idea is to give the feeling that you're looking at a world that contains a bewildering profusion of parts, all of which have names. In other artwork you can go for simplicity and mystery, but here, pile on the invented facts.

11 KEEP THE MAP IN A STATE OF FLUX

It's a good idea to plan out the map but keep it fluid until your story is well developed. If the map is kept in draft form as long as possible, it can stimulate the story process without forcing things into a corner.

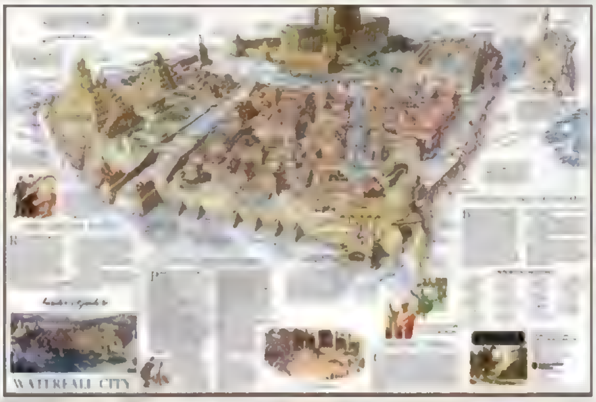
12 CONSIDER YOUR TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

How people get around your world should affect how you design it. For example, if people in your world travel by rhino-carriages that can only go 12 miles a day, make sure you don't place the inns a hundred miles apart. Or if you have a hollow earth, design a cool route to get into it.

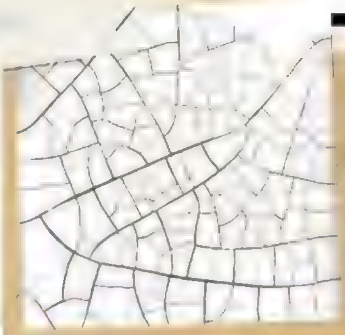


13 THE MINDSET BEHIND THE MAP

Creating a map with a period flavour requires more than just burning the edges or dipping it in tea. It's the intention behind the map that sets the style. Who made the map? The queen's eunuch? A panel of scholars? And why was this map drawn or published? Was it a hasty scribble made by a dragon hunter, a printed piece intended to lure homesteaders or a document made to celebrate the glory of an omnipotent ruler? Every map is a political document, reflecting the mindset of the people who created it. The graphic design should reflect that. In the title block of the 19th century style Dinotopia map, the map seems to have been drawn up by a bureaucracy of cartographers, and then, according to the rubber stamp, it later entered into a French collection.

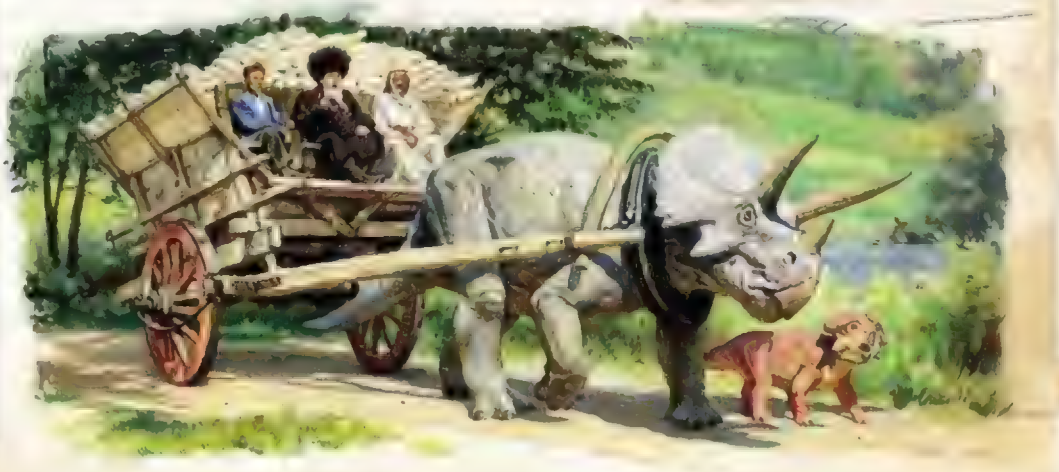


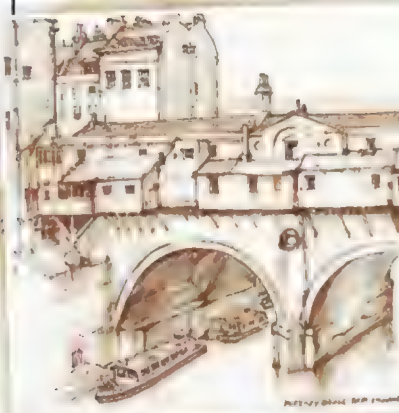
> “Creating a map with a period flavour requires more than just dipping it in tea”

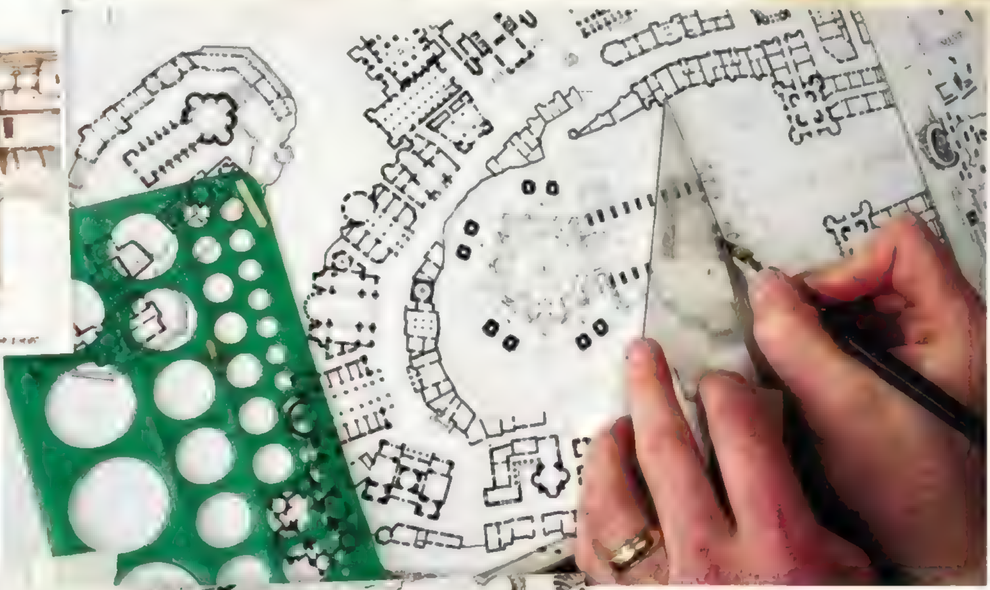


14 GET IDEAS FROM NATURAL GEOMETRY

Nothing says mundane like boring, rectilinear geometry. So depart from it. The design for the street grid of the city of Chandara was inspired by the cracking paint on the door of my town's Chinese food restaurant, which reminded me of the ordered randomness of cities such as Paris and Amsterdam, whose street grids include broad, straight avenues and little winding side streets left over from the Medieval period. You might find inspiration by staring at patterns of bark, crystal formations, soap bubbles or photomicrographs.





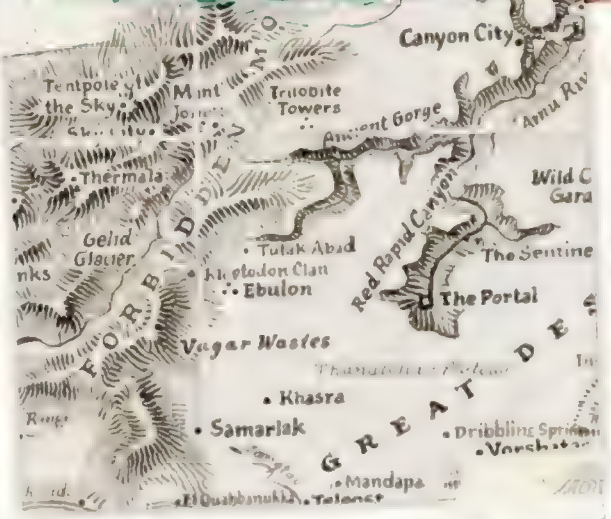


15 DIG INTO YOUR SKETCHBOOKS

Impressions that you absorb through sketching lodge deep in your brain and inform your imagination. When it came to inventing a bridge over a canal in Waterfall City, I remembered sketching Pulteney Bridge in Bath, England. I used that unique bridge as my prototype for the old bridge in Waterfall City. Having walked across the real version, I could imagine my fantasy version much more easily.

16 CLASSIFY NAMES WITH TYPE FONTS

The place names in the old-fashioned Dinotopia map are lettered in three different styles: spaced-out caps for extensive geographic features like mountain ranges; caps and lower case for town names; and italics for small natural features such as lakes and points of land.


Canyon City
Tentpole the Sky
Mount Jo
Trilobite Towers
Ancient Gorge
Amu Riv
Thermala
Wild C
Gara
Gelid Glacier
Tulak Abad
Kleptodon Clan
Ebulon
Red Rapid Canyon
The Sentine
The Portal
Vagar Wastes
FORBIDDEN MO
Khasra
Samarlak
GREAT DE
Dribbling Springs
Mandapa

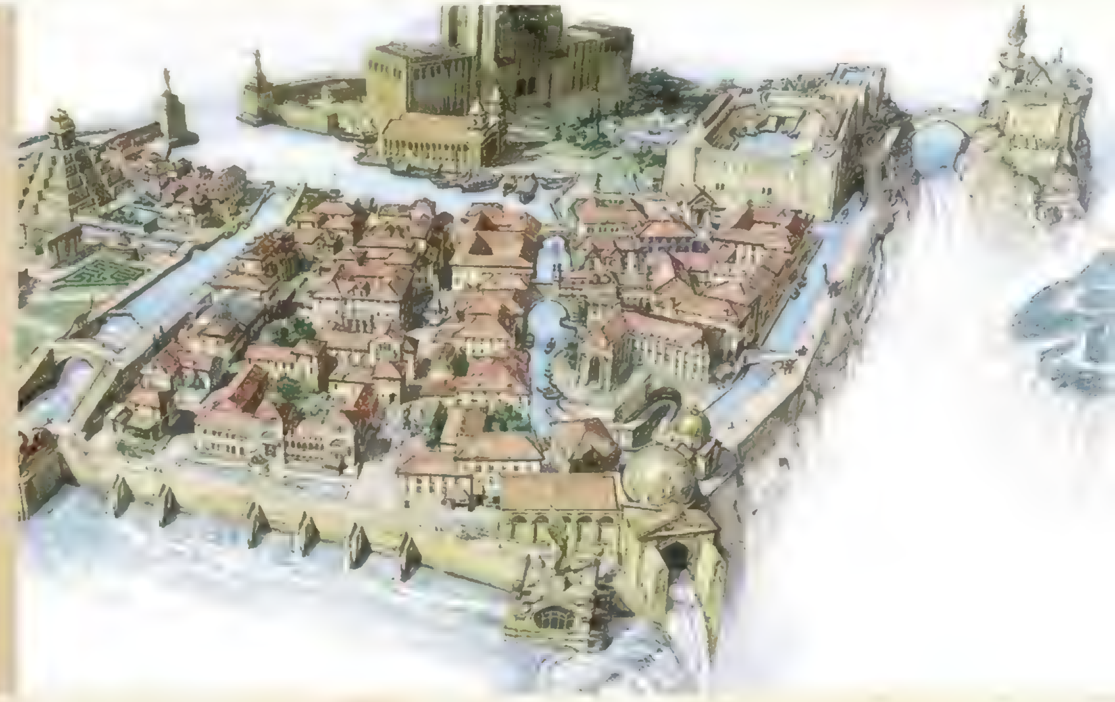
18 TO GET A PERIOD LOOK, USE TRADITIONAL RENDERING TECHNIQUES

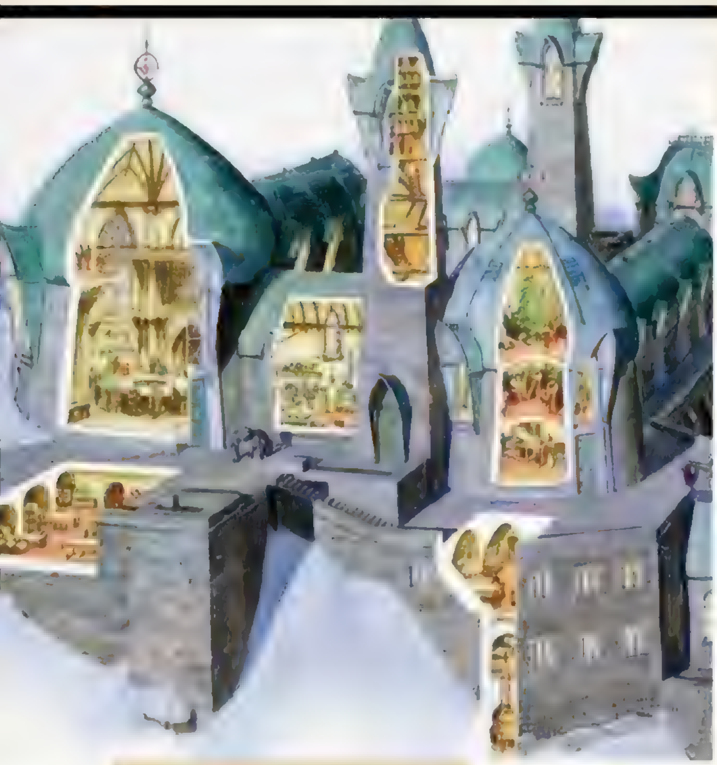
To give the map a handmade look, draw it by hand. Digital fonts are convenient, but not convincing. If you can, use the tools that they would have used in times of yore. When I went to give this map a 19th century look, I drew the whole thing with a steel dip pen in a mid-19th century style.

> “Drawing up a building plan will help you work out interior spaces”

17 TRANSPARENT MEDIA SPEEDS UP THE RENDERING

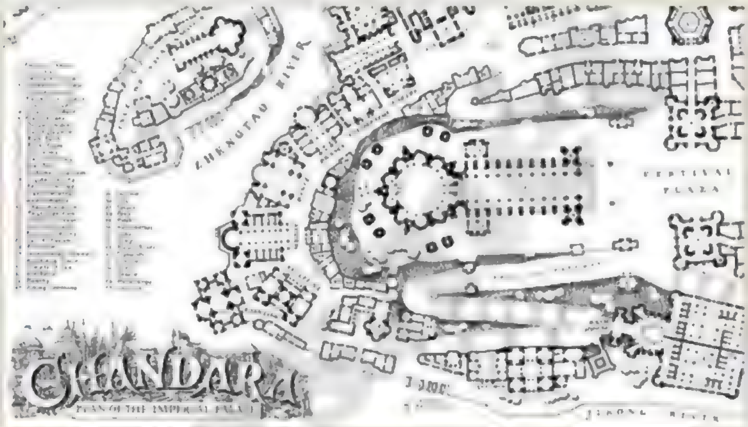
The overview of Waterfall City explains the layout of the streets and canals. I did it after publishing the big panorama, so I had to stick to what I had already established. The overview solidified my own understanding. Drawing and painting each building didn't take as long as it might appear. It's painted in transparent oil wash over a tight pencil drawing on illustration board, which had been sealed with acrylic matte medium. As a result, the whole rendering, including the drawing, only took four days.





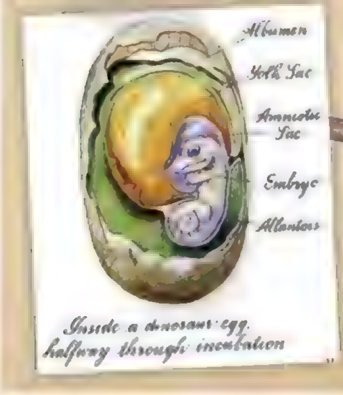
20 WHEN TO USE A BUILDING PLAN

When a cluster of architectural elements, such as a castle complex or a marketplace, becomes especially important to your story, you might want to develop a building plan, as I did for the area surrounding the imperial palace in Chandara. A building plan shows the foundations of each building, with the walls filled in with black. Thick lines represent thick walls, columns are dots and round towers are circles. Even if you don't publish such a diagram, a well-conceived building plan helps you work out interior spaces, and it can be a great help in planning shot angles for games or film adaptations that might develop in the future.



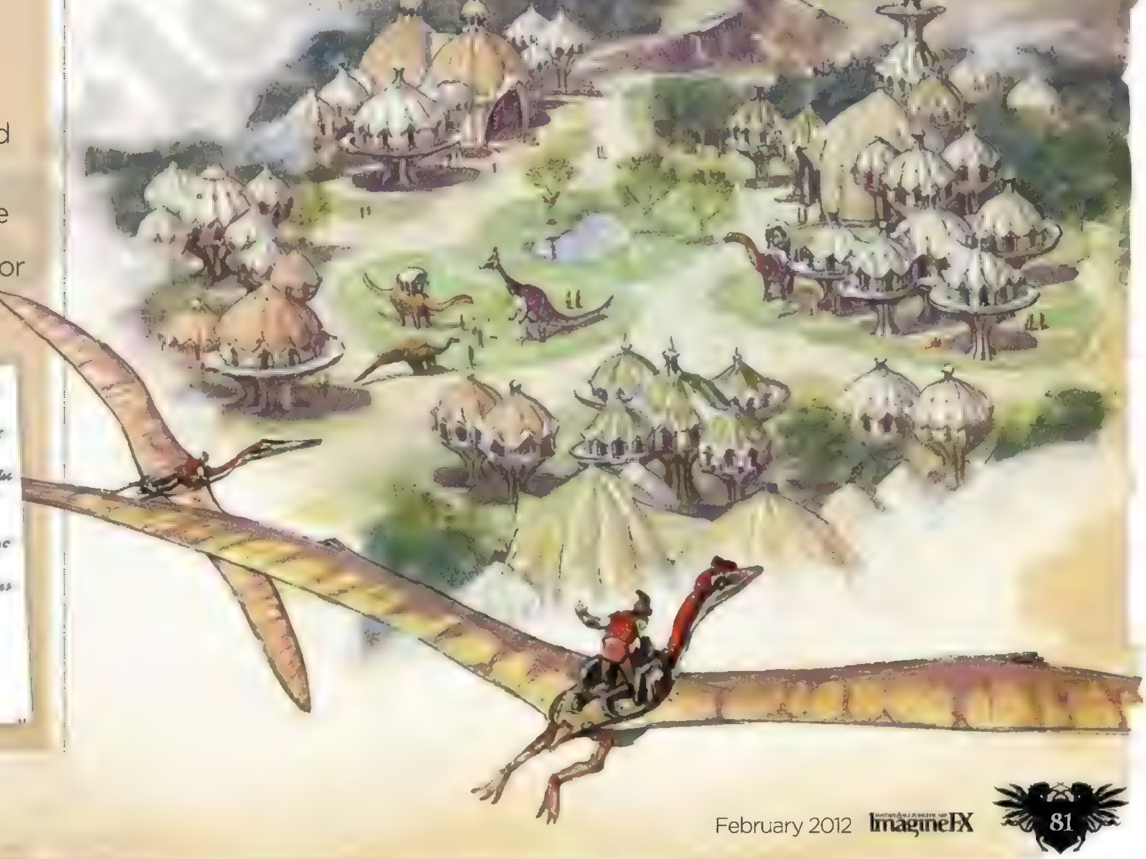
19 SLICE INTO A BUILDING, VEHICLE OR CREATURE

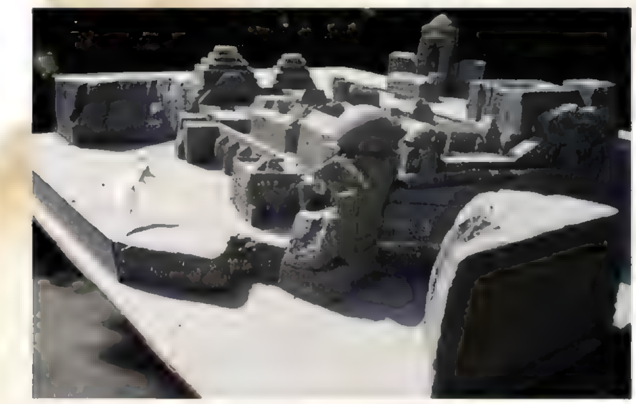
A cutaway view is a rendering that removes the outer layers of a vehicle, building, or creature to reveal its interior structure. It gives the viewer a chance to see how something is constructed or how it works. We see such views when an earthquake crumbles one wall of a house and leaves a person's living space open for inspection. You can use cutaways to show the workings of an engine or how many stomachs it takes for a dragon to digest a maiden.


Albumen
Yolk Sac
Amniotic Sac
Embryo
Allantois
Inside a dinosaur egg halfway through incubation

21 FLY LIKE A BIRD

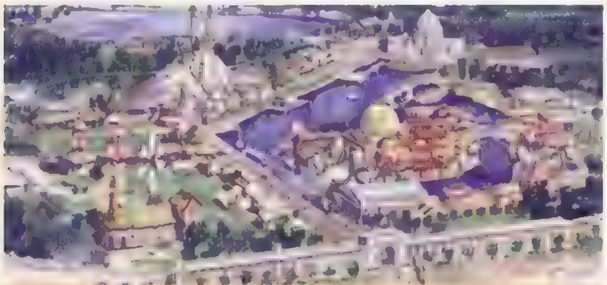
Also known as a bird's-eye view, the aerial view lays out the spatial relationships of buildings and streets. An aerial view is a hybrid between a map and a landscape painting. Because the view is oblique, unlike a map, it's possible to see the façades. The aerial view of the pod village of Bonabba is an establishing shot for a sequence in Dinotopia: The World Beneath. Riders on giant pterosaurs see the whole pod village spread before them. ➻





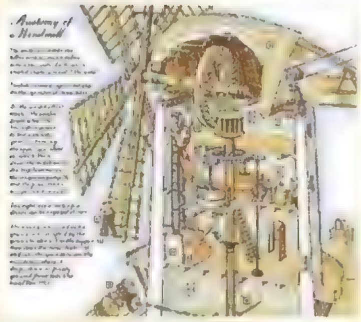
22 MAKE A SCHEMATIC MAQUETTE

To see how the basic elements of your aerial shot fit together, make a quick maquette out of chunks of packing foam or pieces of foam core board glued onto a quick model of the site. This really helps if you're trying to work out the lighting on architecture built on uneven terrain. The landscape base can be hacked out of foam or made with burlap soaked in plaster. Then spray paint the maquette with flat gray primer and photograph it in any kind of light.



23 PLAN YOUR THEME PARK

So what if it would cost a billion dollars to build? It doesn't cost anything to dream. So I've sketched various views of my fantasy of a Dinotopia theme park, complete with a hatchery, cave rides, water excursions, and exhibition halls. Having a rendering of this kind, even a quick one, goes a long way toward making an idea seem more tangible.



24 WIELD THE KNIFE

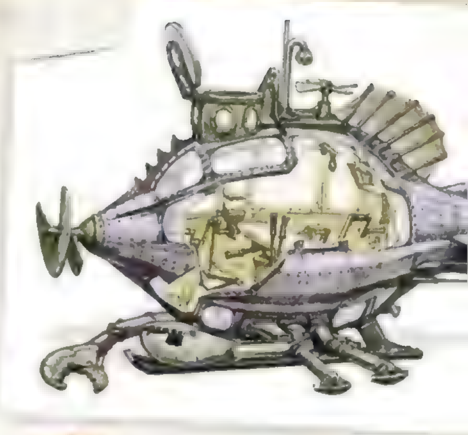
To make a cutaway view, slice away outer layers to show the key parts of the interior. The cuts should follow flat planes, but can change at jagged angles. The wall that you cut through can be shown as either white or black, unless it's vital to show what material it's made from.

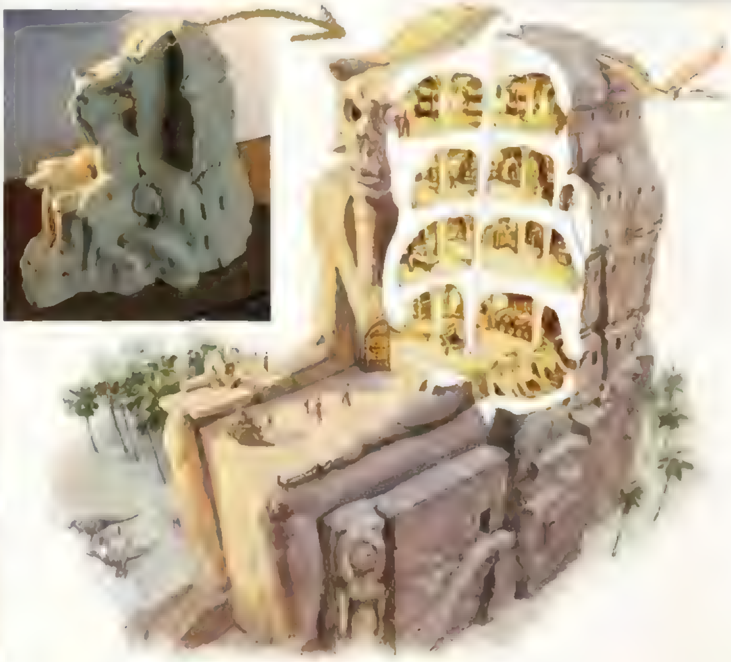
Imaginative Realism

[illegible]

25 TWO WAYS TO LIGHT A CUTAWAY

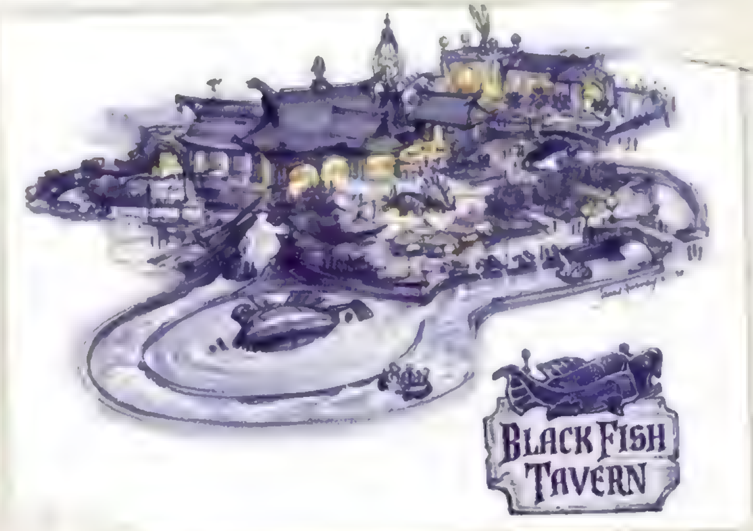
The whole form, inside and out, can be lit with a single, consistent light source, as if you really hacked into a termite mound and photographed the results. Alternatively, the inside spaces can be lit with a different coloured light than the light on the outside. This is especially effective with warmly lit interior spaces, while the exterior is lit with cool moonlight or twilight.





26 EXTEND YOUR WORLD IN TIME AND SPACE

Now that you've imagined your world in spatial terms, consider how all the maps and cutaways might evolve in time. What empires rose and fell after your map was drawn? Whether you accomplish these visuals in digital or hand-made tools, you'll leave behind clues to guide your own future journeys, and the journeys of those who follow after...



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Photoshop

DEVELOP A UNIQUE FANTASY FIGURE

Charlie Bowater shows why you should hang on to your sketches, as she celebrates death by injecting new life into an old piece of lineart

Artist **PROFILE**

Charlie Bowater

[illegible]

[illegible]

When creating characters I find myself avoiding using the word 'original' to describe them. Not because I think there's no such thing, but I've found it can suck the fun out of creating them. My biggest reason for painting characters in the first place is because it's something I've always enjoyed doing.

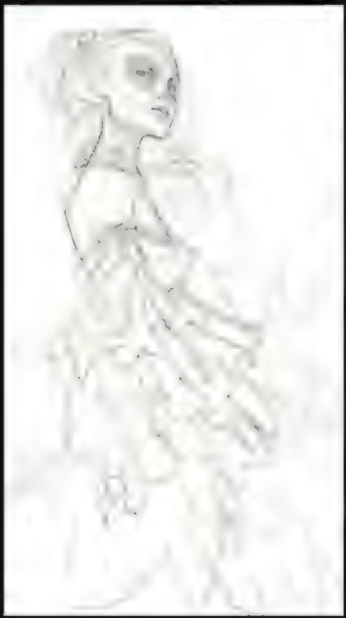
I don't think many things are original anymore, but just because something has been done before doesn't mean you can't put your own spin on it and still create something unique. All artists are inspired, and most of us take inspiration from any and all of the different works we might like. Mixing together inspiration that you find with your own ideas and methods will certainly help you on the road to creating something unique.

ImagineFX asked me to create a painting inspired by a previous sketch of mine: a sketch of a Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead) themed girl. Día de Muertos-inspired women are synonymous with the very well-known artist Sylvia Ji. A Day of the Dead theme is something I'd never tried before and I really enjoyed sketching it. So when I was asked to work that up into a final painting, I was pretty happy.

I'll be taking you from the original sketch through to the final painting, and explaining my methods along the way.

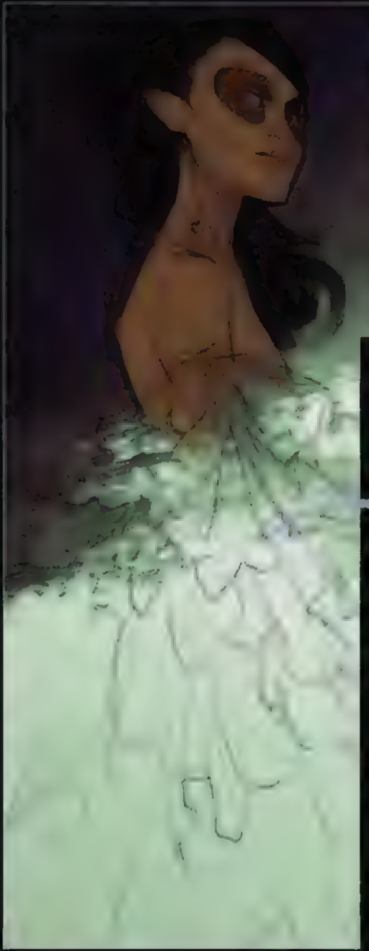
1 Change of methodology

A few years ago my method was to take my traditional sketches straight into Photoshop and use them as my base for most paintings. I still very much enjoy and admire those who follow that method, but I rarely use it these days. Over the years I've become increasingly comfortable with sketching straight into Photoshop. It's something I've become used to, so it's pretty much habit.



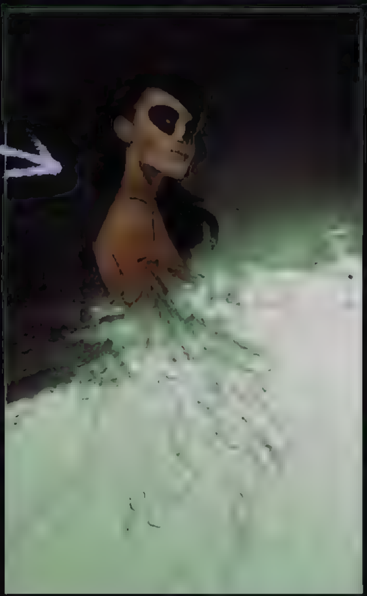
2 Starting with the sketch

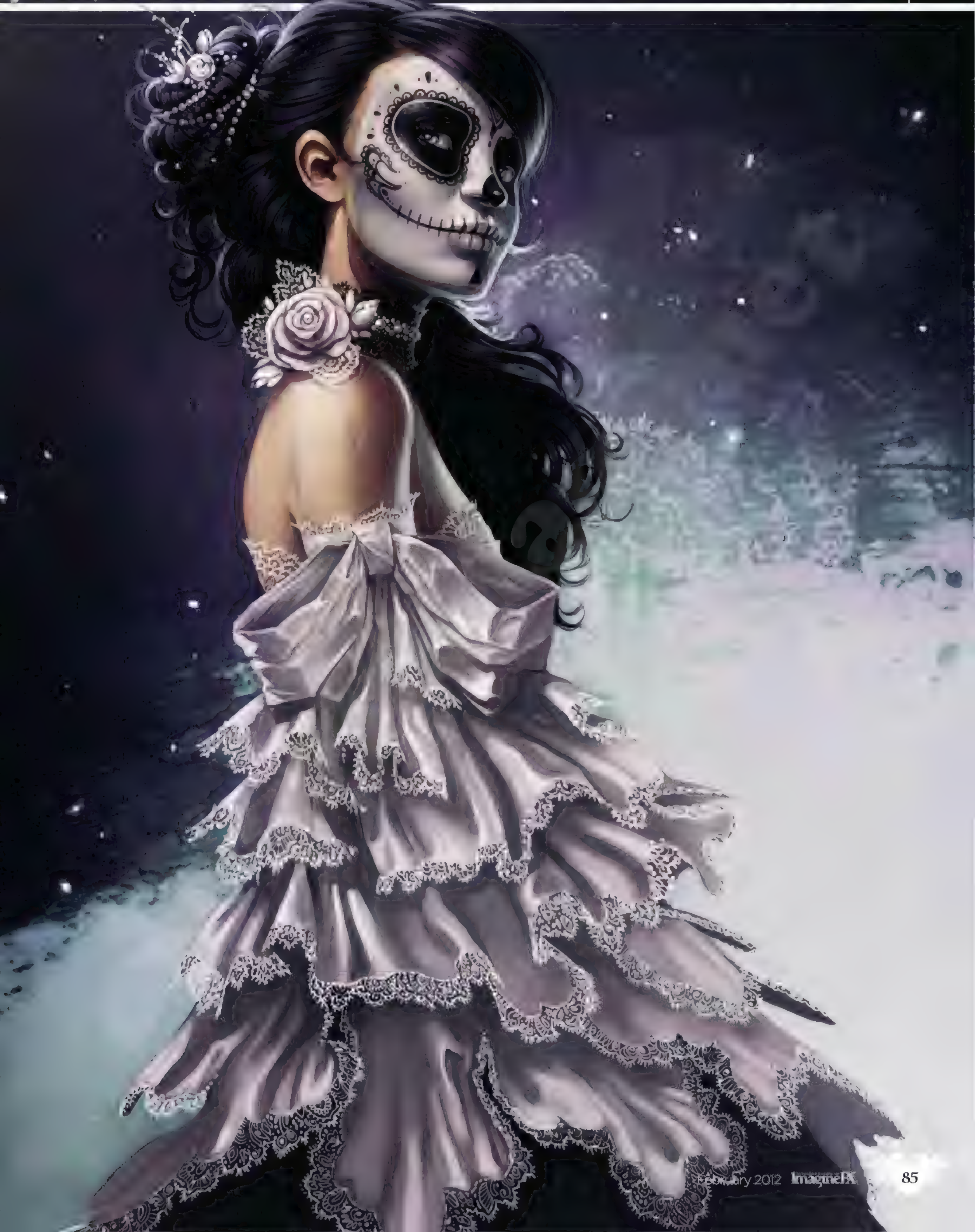
So, although I have a sketch readily available, I'm still quickly re-sketching the idea into Photoshop and using the original as more of an inspiration rather than a guide. I'm starting with a 2,480x3,508-sized canvas at 300dpi and a custom brush by Rob G. Rob's brushes are a definite favourite of mine. I like their great hard edges, which can give you some nice textures. I'll also have my brush set to 100 per cent opacity and flow for the entirety of the painting, although you may find lowering the opacity may help you.



3 Base colours

Now that I have a simple sketch, it's enough for me to get started with the colour. I'm going to keep the colour choices simple, and try and stick with a monochrome palette. I'm taki inspiration from the original sketch and keeping things fairly black and white. I set my sketch layer to Multiply [illegible] base colours on [illegible] the sketch.

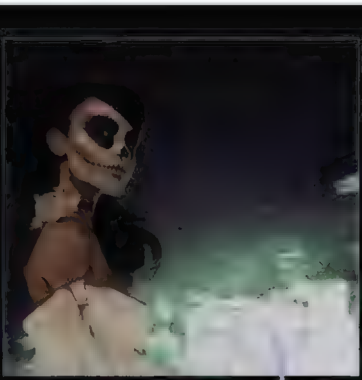


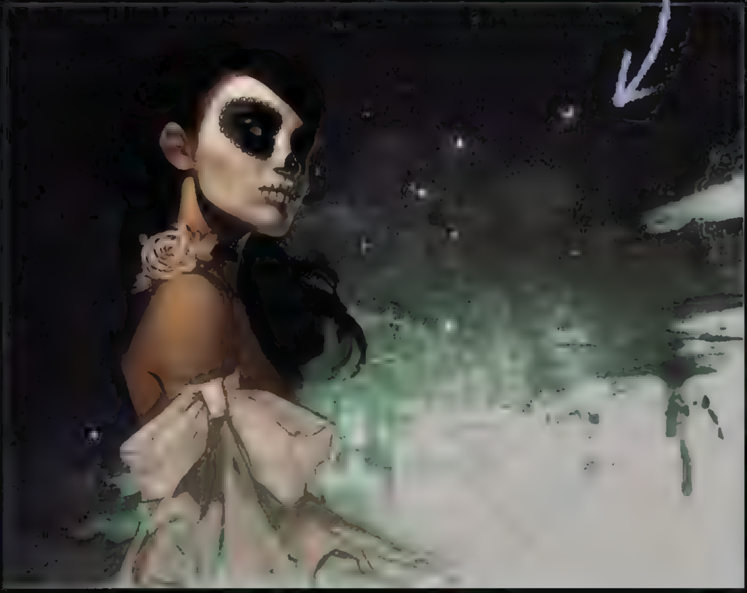


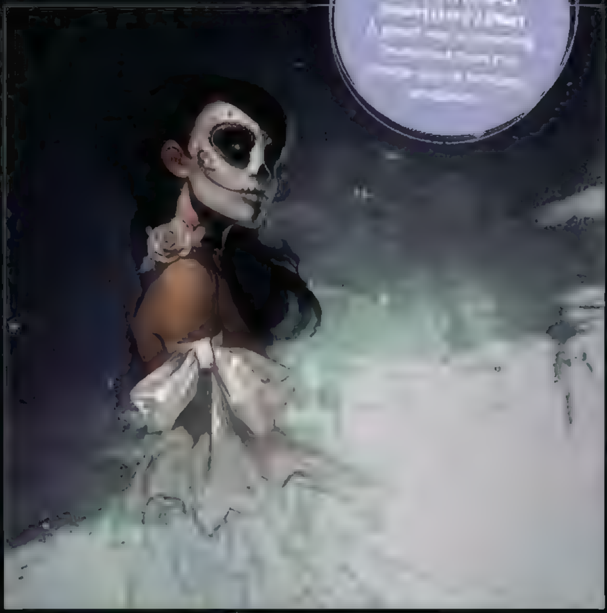
[illegible]

4 A simple background

I'm not entirely sure what I want to do with the background at this point, so I just begin by experimenting with colours and effects. I know I want to keep things fairly monochrome, so I'm blocking out a harsh black and white background. I'm giving it a grungy painted texture to blend the two, by using a texture on the join. I'm also laying down the base colours for her skin; it's a darkish mid-tone at this point, as I generally prefer to paint from dark to light.





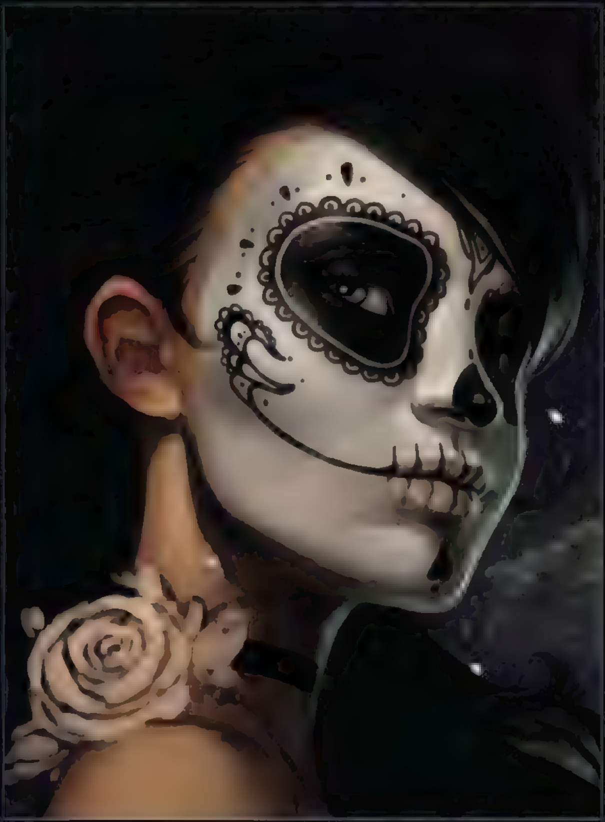


5 Experimenting

A lot of my character creation comes purely from experimenting and, of course, just going with what I like. I find that I take inspiration from most of the characters I've seen illustrated, and I mean most! It can be any kind of character. I can be inspired by anything and everything: the build of a person, the era in which they're set, their outfits, clothes, features, the styles and methods in which they are painted. Take a good look around you and you'll find an abundance of wonderful art to inspire you. Soon enough my mind is swimming with all the people I want to paint and I'm chomping at the bit to get going.

6 Character considerations

Once you have something in mind, it can help to streamline your ideas a little bit and focus on the type of character you want to create. Consider gathering references and think about who this character is. Do they have a story? Are they set in a specific era, does their clothing style make sense? You can flesh out a character as much as you want to, or on the other hand you can just go with whatever you like.



PRO SECRETS

Color balance

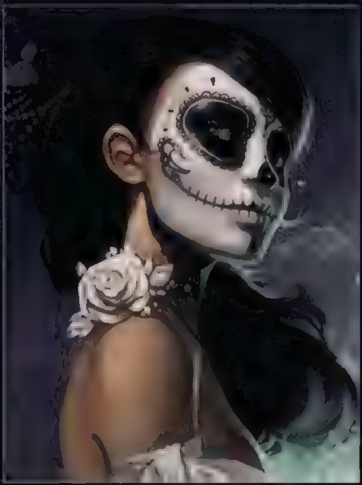
[illegible]

7 Layer strategy

As soon I have my sketch and base colours finished, everything I paint from this point onwards is on a layer above them. Throughout the process of a painting I tend to flatten the painting as I go. I always think you should use as many layers as you're comfortable with.

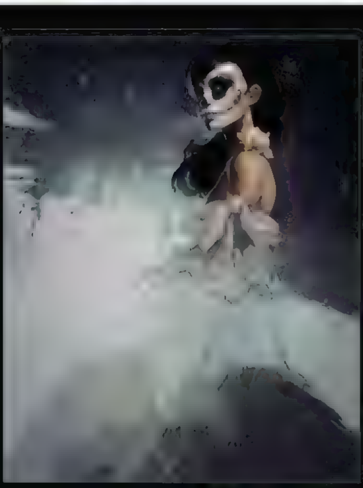
8 First details

Now that I'm pretty happy with the sketch and base colours, I can move on to adding some detail to the character. I nearly always start with the face. This is a character-focused piece and so I like to be happy with the face and the focus of the painting before I move onto detailing the rest. I'm using a smaller brush size and gradually building up the form of her face by adding in shadows, highlights and contours. The tones of her face are simple, because my colour palette here is mostly black and white. I add a fairly rough bit of detail to her hair and also to her outfit, just to start bringing out the form.



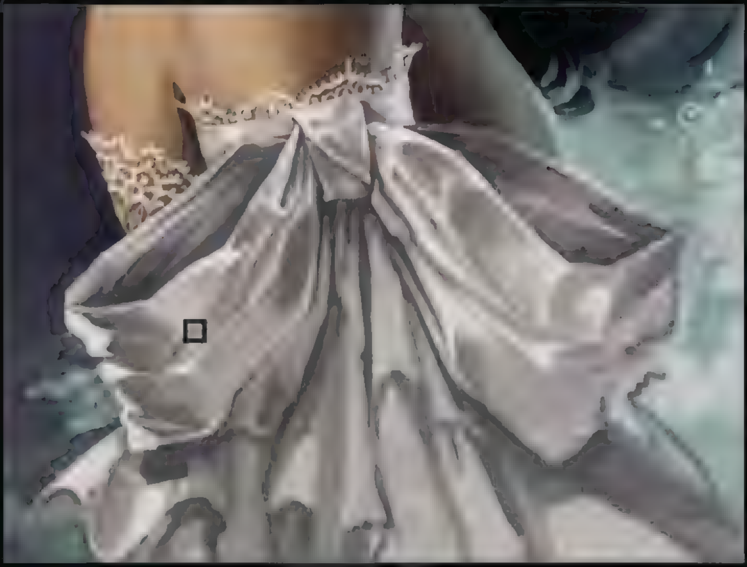
9 The benefits of flipping the painting

One of the most important parts of any painting process is to flip your image. It's a good habit to pick up if you aren't doing it already. Your eyes can get a little too used to what they're seeing in a painting, and sometimes it can be easy to miss mistakes. Flipping your image will give you a whole new perspective on your painting and any mistakes you've made will stick out like a sore thumb. You can then go in and fix your errors before you get too far in. I flip my image an awful lot, instinctively as I work. I think it's a good idea to flip every hour or so at least.



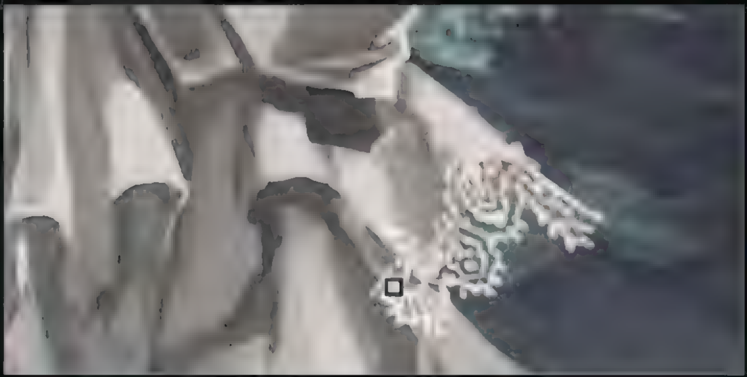
10 Overlay layers

Some things that I use frequently throughout a painting are Overlay layers and Color Balance. Using Overlay layers can be a useful way to add stronger colours to the image and make highlights pop. Here I'm adding in some creamy coloured tones over her skin to bring out the highlights. I'll do this a few times throughout, and although the opacity varies depending on how strong you want the highlight to be, I generally like to keep the opacity pretty low.



11 Further detail

Detail work is something that isn't really done in the final stages of a painting for me – instead it's something that I work on throughout the whole process. I spend a lot of time adding and refining details. There's a lot of detail work in this painting, so I guess it's a good job that it's something I enjoy.



PRO SECRETS

Flip it

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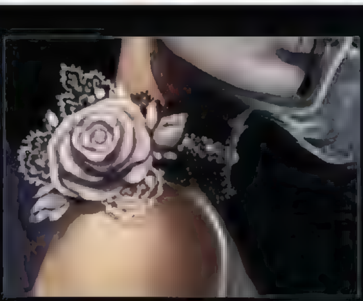
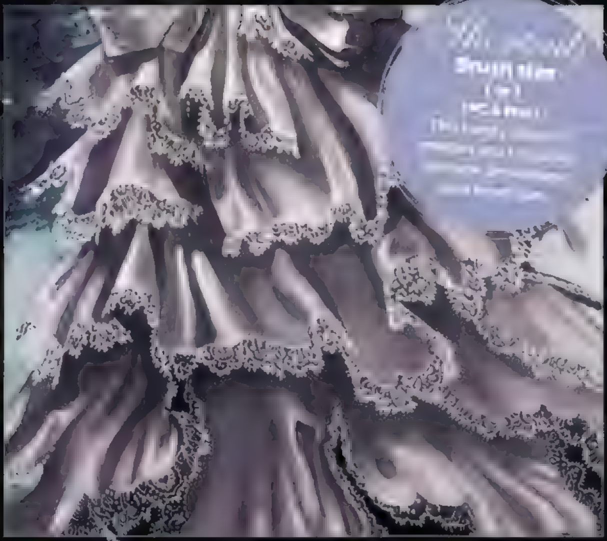


12 Final touches

Still using a pretty small brush, I'm adding in the finer details. I start working on the pattern of her face paint design and begin to add in the sections of lace in her outfit. I'm painting the lace by hand; I could find brushes that mimic lace and use those instead, but I find them to be more work than necessary. There are a lot of layers to her outfit and lots of lace, so I'd have to do a lot of tweaking to make pre-made lace effects match the folds in her clothes. So I'm just using a very small brush and adding in the lace myself. There's no set pattern as you can see when zoomed in – I'm just painting patterns rather randomly. When you zoom out however, the patterns read as lace. I'm painting the fabric as a silky material but with lots of creases. I try to paint the fabric to look as natural as I can. If this is something you struggle with then gather some references as aids. From here on out it's just a process of refining the details until I'm happy.



Brush size

[illegible]

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH

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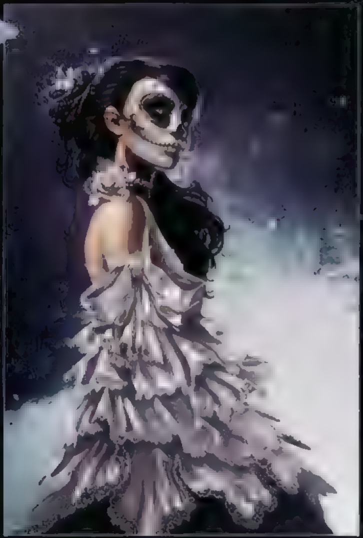


Procreate

PAINTING FROM LIFE ON THE iPAD

Have you ever painted in a museum? **Karlsimon** shows how creative use of an iPad in such a place can help feed your imagination...

Painting from life is a big subject to cover in a single article, but in this workshop I'll try to show you one way of sketching that I really enjoy when it's too cold to paint outdoors. I use life painting as a complement to the work I do in the studio. The purpose is not to make pretty pictures, but studying reality and use what I learn for projects I do at home.

With the software available today we artists are a little bit spoiled for tools. Painting from life using traditional media requires more structure and planning, and you need to make each decision count. To me, working on the iPad falls somewhere in between working in Photoshop and working traditionally. The software that's available is basic compared to something like Photoshop, but it's this simplicity that makes it a great tool for life painting. For example, the iPad's lack of pressure sensitivity is, I believe, an advantage. It forces you to make clearer decisions, which results in a more 'direct' painting.

Another neat thing about the iPad is that the apps are so cheap. I've tried a few of them including SketchBook Pro and Brushes, but the one I like best so far is Procreate, which I'll be using for this particular workshop.

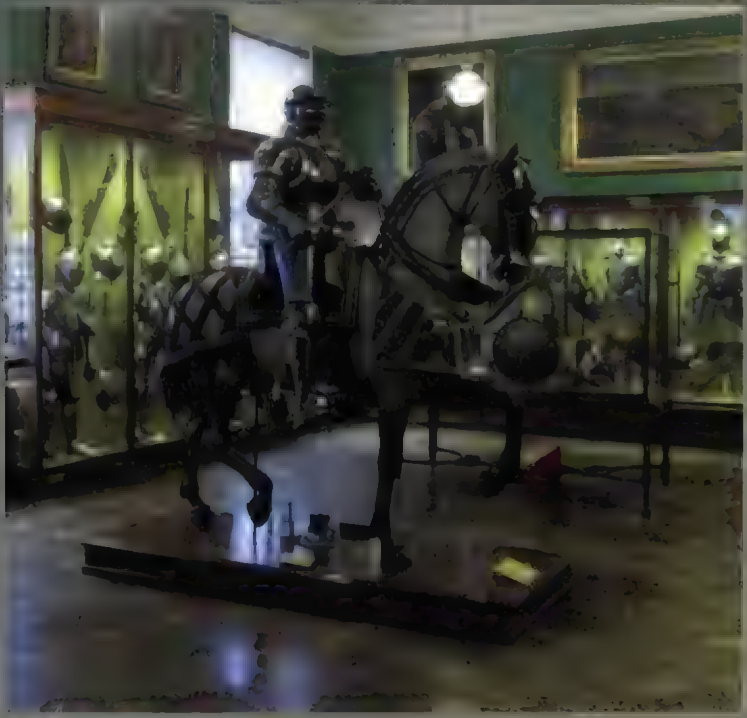
Yet the greatest advantage of the iPad, Galaxy or any other tablet must be its portability – you can do colour sketches wherever you are! I took my iPad to the Wallace Collection, in the heart of London's West End, to paint some medieval armour. Here's how I got on...

Artist **PROFILE**

Karlsimon

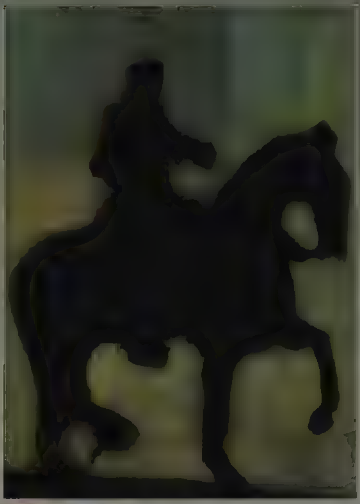
COUNTRY: England

[illegible]



1 Find a composition

Once I've decided what to paint [illegible]



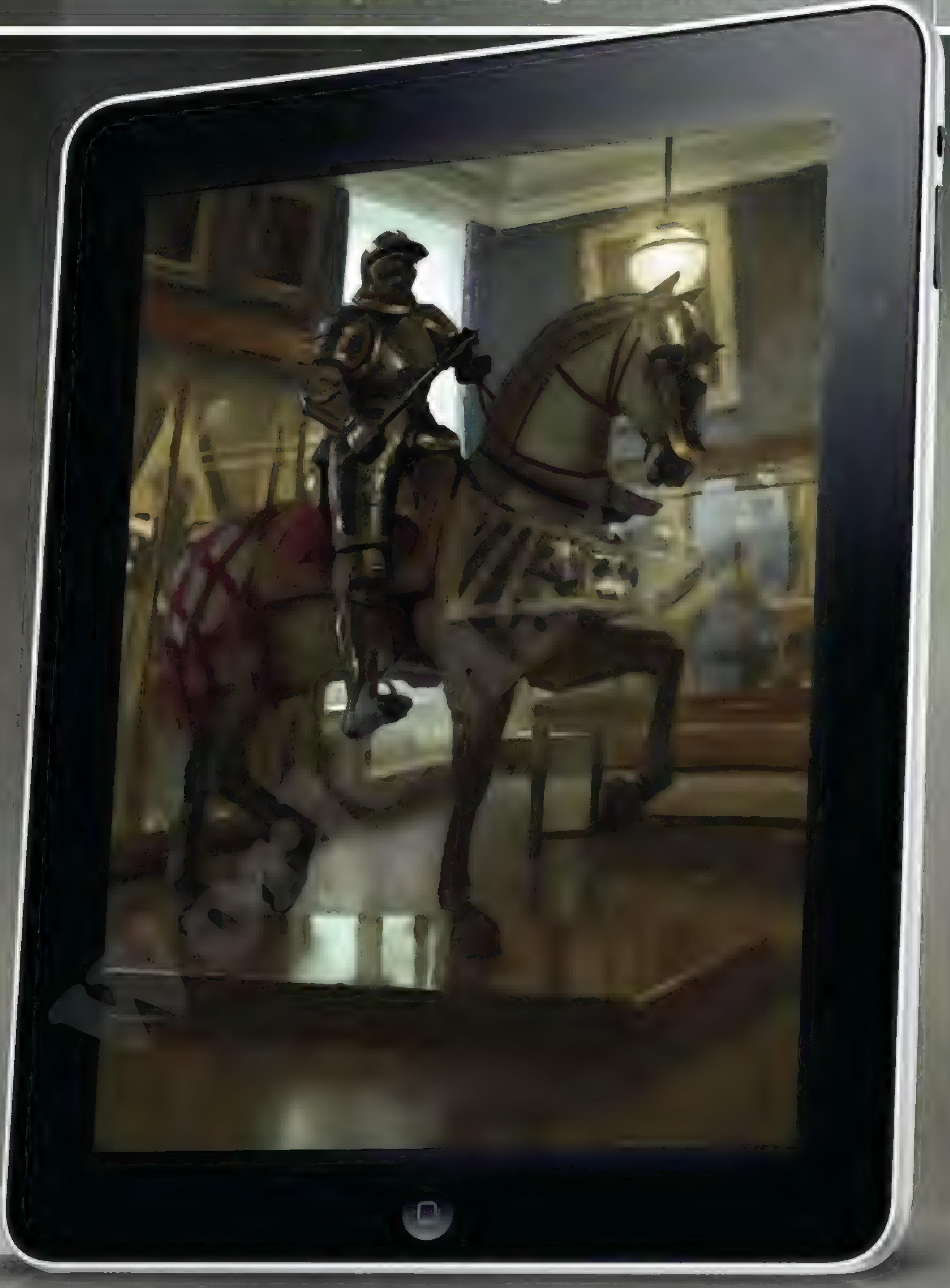
2 Get your canvas wet

[illegible] values in the lower [illegible]. I want to create a flat [illegible]nd that has some vibrancy to it. [illegible] of my background, on a new layer, I [illegible] in the shape of my main subject using a soft-edged brush. I make it look ugly almost on purpose, ensuring that I include all the different elements. I then [illegible]

PRO SECRETS

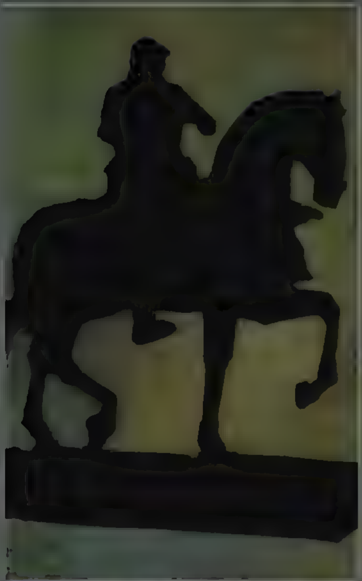
Use your eyes

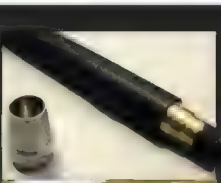
[illegible]



3 Measure the proportions

Once I'm happy with the shape and its size on the canvas, I start assessing its various components. What I'm trying to do is make sure things are correctly placed relative to each other; I'm attempting to see the three-dimensional form in front of me as a two-dimensional shape that I can paint. When I paint this big shape, I'm toggling between the Brush tool and the Eraser tool. This leaves me with a clean shape that I can later lock as a mask. As I grow more confident that things are in proportion, I slowly work towards a sharper-edged silhouette.





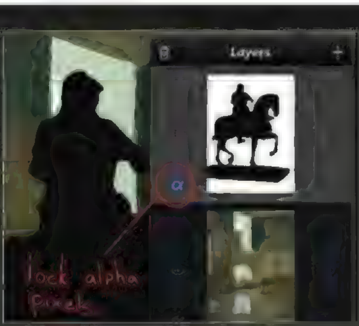
PRO SECRETS

Stylish stylus

[illegible]

6 Lock alpha pixels

One of the great advantages of digital tools is the possibility to create masks. There's no Selection tool or Layer Masks in Procreate, but I work around this by locking the pixels I've painted so that they become their own mask. It's the same thing that Photoshop calls Lock Transparent Pixels. Simply click the alpha symbol on any layer and you'll lock its pixels.



7 Model the form

After locking the foreground, I pick a big brush and blob in some colours. I use brushes that have semi-transparency and smudgy characteristics. Still keeping things soft, I'm trying to show the form with some subtle differences between cold and warm areas. I look around the room, noting which lights are present. I also try to take note of how the lights affect the colour temperature of the shadows. The green walls don't look particularly nice to me, so I decide to redecorate and paint them grey instead. So far so good!

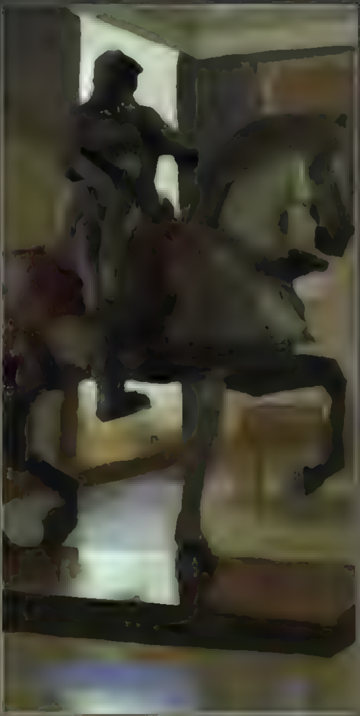
PRO SECRETS

Sketch for real

[illegible]

8 Light considerations

There's a window off to the left that hits the rear of the horse and knight with a cool blue light, but it's diffused by a blind, so there are no sharp shadows. There's also a lot of warm light coming from the ceiling lamps from various directions. So we end up with a top to bottom, warm diffuse light and a left to right, cold diffuse light.

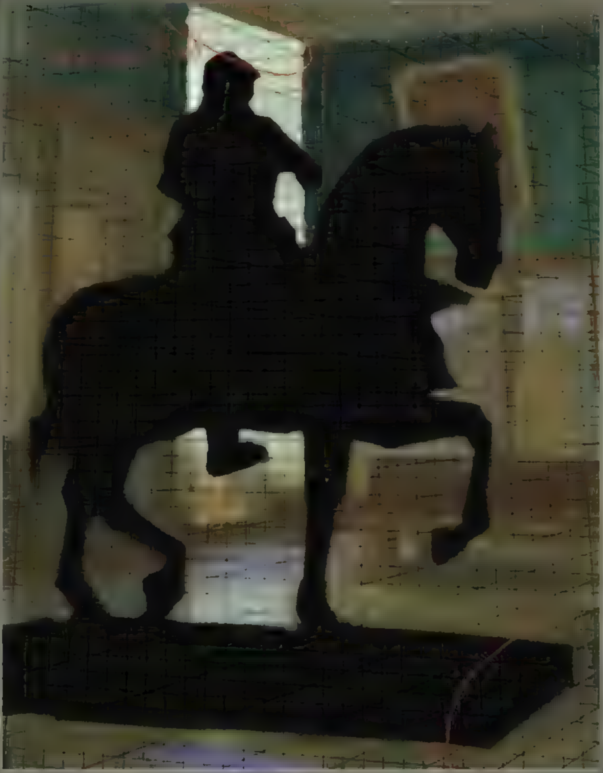


4 Draw the background with shapes

The foreground shape helps me to measure and compare the sizes of the shapes in the background. If things don't add up, there's probably something wrong with the foreground shape, so I jump back to it every now and then to make alterations or corrections. I pay particularly close attention to the perspective of the walls and floor, trying to capture the right depth by accurately measuring the size of the shapes further back in the room.

5 Greater perspective

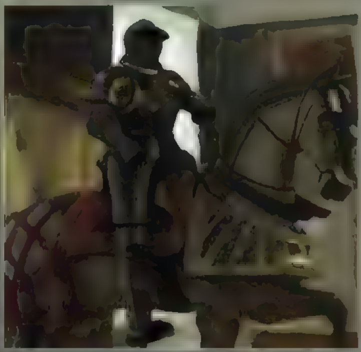
Even though I try to be as precise as I can, I'm not happy with the perspective. To help me along, I load in a grid as a Multiply layer to make sure all the lines go to the correct vanishing points. This is a great help, but I always try to paint without the grid first, for practice. Once these initial steps are done, what I end up with is essentially a drawing. Not a conventional line drawing, but a drawing made up of shapes of flat paint. From here I can move on to the next stage of my creative endeavour.

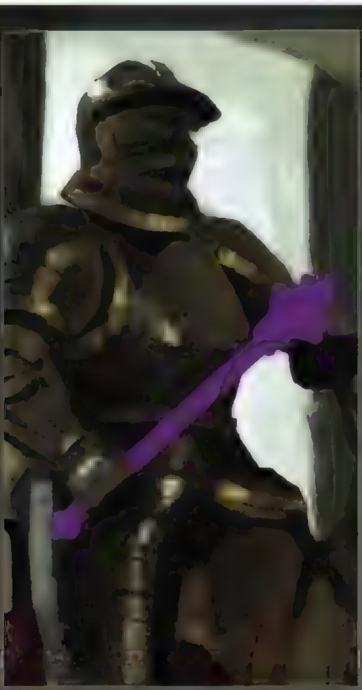


Bad perspective

9 Describe materials

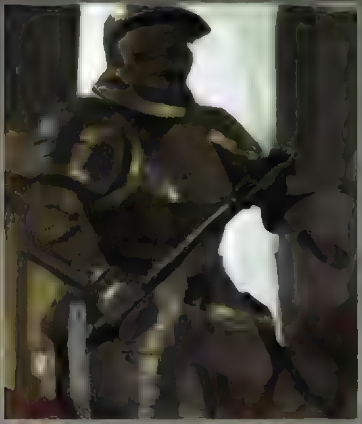
I try to play up the differences in the materials, painting the velvet cloth at the back of the horse with very soft brush strokes, contrasting this with the sharp, edgy look of the armour on the horse's chest. When [illegible] up the different surfaces [illegible] I tend to jump between foreground and background, painting whatever draws my attention. This way I can slowly build up the focus where I want it. Where reflections and edges look too sharp or bright, I use the Smudge tool with a texture brush assigned to it to soften the paint strokes.





10 Mask important details

There's a lot of overlapping going on around the knight so I decide to paint the mace he's holding separately. To help me see what I'm doing I paint it in a strong contrasting colour at full opacity. Up until this point I've hardly zoomed in at all. Staying zoomed out helps me see the bigger picture, but sometimes the brushstrokes just aren't accurate enough so I zoom in to make sure things end up in the right place.



11 Colour the mask

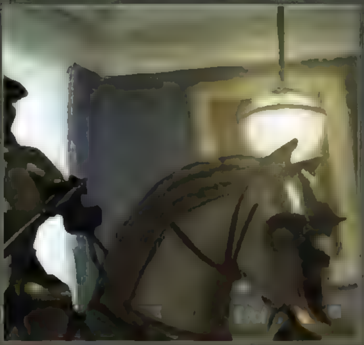
Once again, when I'm happy with the shape of the mace, I lock the layer and colour it in. To make the knight's hand read a little better, I broaden the reflection on the leg armour behind the hand.

12 Bring life to the background

After working up the foreground, the background starts to look [illegible]. I paint the column behind the knight on a separate layer. To make the foreground pop [illegible] in the background are too sharp, but I still try to describe the shapes as accurately as possible. I pay close attention to the window's light reflections across the floor, [illegible] the sharp contrasts it makes on the plinth.

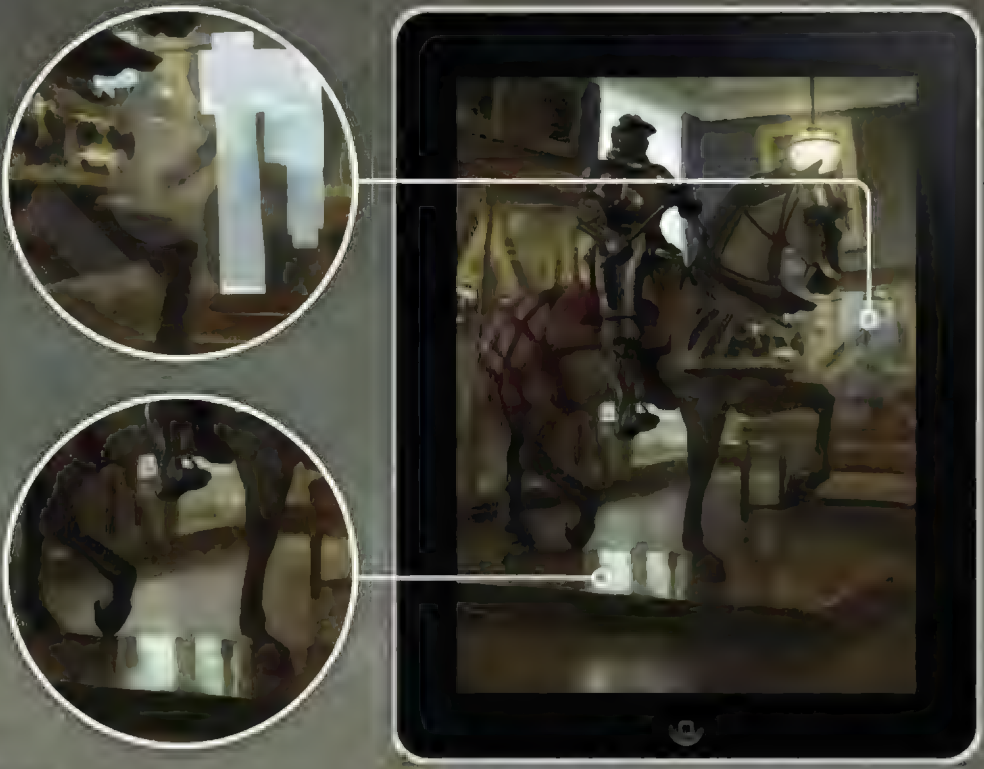
13 Add atmosphere

To make the horse and rider stand out a little, I add some lighting effects. Using a large brush I rough in some dark blue paint on a new layer set to Add. Then I smudge this paint with a Scatter brush until I produce a pleasing, textured gradient. I use the same process to create a glow for the ceiling light, but this time I put it in front of the horse's head to create a sort of flare.



14 Glass reflections

These can be tricky to get right so again I do them on a separate layer. I paint an opaque shape, lock it, and give it some texture and colour variation. It takes a little while to get a shape that looks satisfactory.



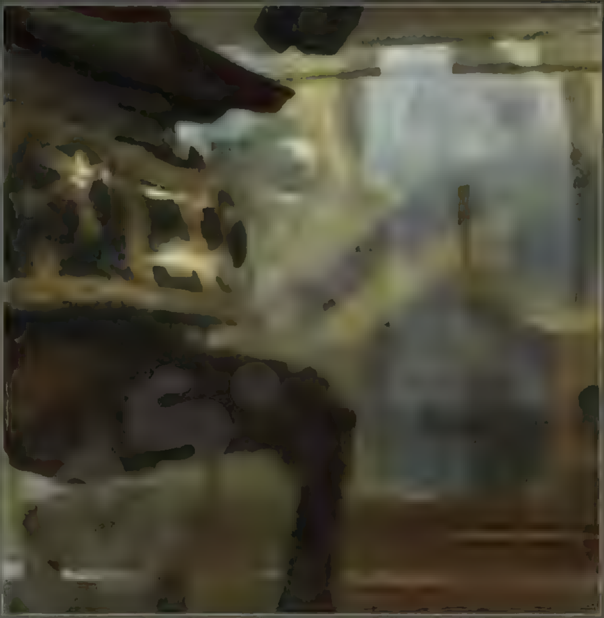
PRO SECRETS

Charge it up

Make sure that the iPad is fully charged before you go out. Seriously, I've forgotten this loads of times!

15 Balancing reflections

When the reflected shape looks just about right I use the Eraser on a very low opacity to carefully reveal what's behind it.



16 Final touches

I have a tendency to paint a bit dark with not enough contrast, so after I finish a sketch I [illegible] Photoshop to perk things up with a Curves or Levels adjustment layer. One nice feature of Procreate is that you can export PSDs [illegible]

Traditional skills

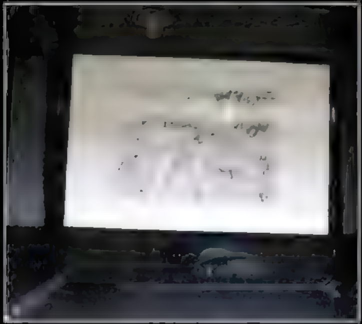
PREPARING YOUR SKETCH FOR PAINT

Discover a fast way to mount your final sketch to a paintable surface, with help from a printer and accomplished artist **Terese Nielsen**

Traditionally, a drawing would be created on tracing paper before the entire sketch was retraced onto the desired painting surface, using carbon/transfer paper. This could take between two and six hours (depending on the intricacy of the sketch), just to be ready to paint.

Nowadays, thankfully, with a scanner and printer, you can print on almost any surface and be ready to paint in just a few minutes. I use Epson's 4880 Ultrachrome archival printer. These prints can be submerged in water and no bleeding occurs. If you're limited to a regular inkjet printer, seal the print Crystal Clear before wet-stretching the print. When it is stretched and dry, it's ready for paint. If you're using oil, seal it with Clear Gesso or Matte Medium.

Bristol
AQUARELLE ARCHES
Velvet Fine Art Paper
Cold Press Bright
EPSON
EPSON
PRO



1 Select the appropriate paper

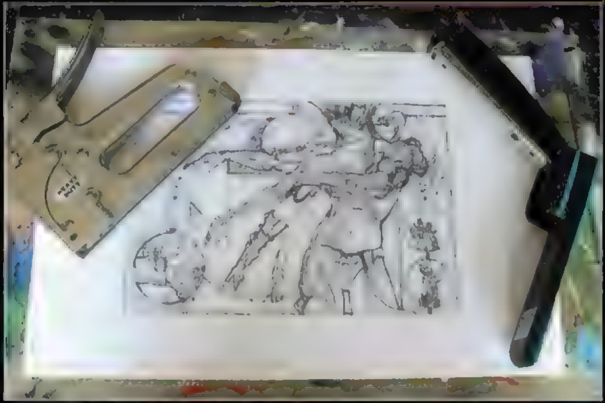
First of all, you should experiment with many papers to find out what you prefer. I use acrylic, oil and coloured pencils in one painting, so accordingly my surface needs to work well with each medium. I wet-stretch the printed sketch, because I begin each painting by layering in loose washes of acrylic. If the print is not wet-stretched, the surface will warp and buckle – not good.

2 Submerge the print in water

Hot water can degrade the paper. So instead use room-temperature water, along with a tray, sink or bathtub. The thicker the paper, the longer it needs to soak. For 121 lb paper give it five minutes, but up to 15 minutes for 300 lb of paper. Remove the print, let the excess water drip off the bottom, and then place it on a flat piece of drywall, wood or masonite panel.

3 Staple the print to a board

Drywall works well. That's because it's cheap, easy to cut to any size and standard staples easily pierce through it. Wrap duct tape around the cut, powdery edges to avoid getting it on your clothes. For masonite or wood panels, you'll need a staple gun. Use it to staple one inch in from the outside of the print and every two inches around the perimeter. Then let it dry flat.



Artist **PROFILE**

Terese Nielsen

COUNTRY: US

Terese graduated from Art Center College of Design, US, and has freelanced for 20 years illustrating for comic books, Lucas Entertainment, book covers and gaming art.

www.tnielsen.com

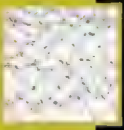
PAPER CHOICES

No matter what thickness or texture of paper you choose, it's important to use quality, 100 per cent cotton rag, acid-free paper.

Hot press paper

An even, smooth textured paper that enables paint to dry quicker, this is great for pen and ink as well as washes and pencil drawings. Examples worth tracking down include Strathmore Bristol 500 three- or four-ply plate and Lanaquarelle 140 lb watercolour.

Cold press paper



This paper has a slightly bumpy texture (medium tooth), so paint has a slower drying time and the texture is subtle enough to paint without losing detail. This enables pigments to settle into the pockets or sit on top, for scumbling technique. I recommend using one of the following papers: Arches 300 lb cold press, Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper or Epson Cold Press Bright.

Rough paper

This is the most exaggerated texture and has the slowest drying time. This paper can be difficult for small detailed rendering and the heavy texture means it's hard to use in printers, so be careful.

Canvas

Great for oil or acrylic and there's no need to wet-stretch it. However, the print should be sealed with Matte Medium or Clear Gesso.

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FOR DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS, PLEASE TURN TO PAGE [illegible]

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How to create perfect composition with master artist Dan dos Santos!

Also

Big picture

Create stunning vistas by using photos to create new textures with Horia Dociu.

Hard sell

Francis Vallejo shows how to construct a traditional poster, from pencil to paint.

Skin deep

Get inside knowledge on how to paint, colour and shade skin, with Anna Pogoda.

ISSUE 80 ON SALE *3 February 2012*

Traditional skills HOW TO MAKE MARKS

Sketching isn't just about the pretty pictures, says **John Howe**, it's all about relating to your art

Artist PROFILE

John Howe

COUNTRY: New Zealand

A legend in the world of The Lord of the Rings illustration, John has worked on Peter Jackson's movie trilogy and is working with Peter again on The Hobbit, which is due out in December

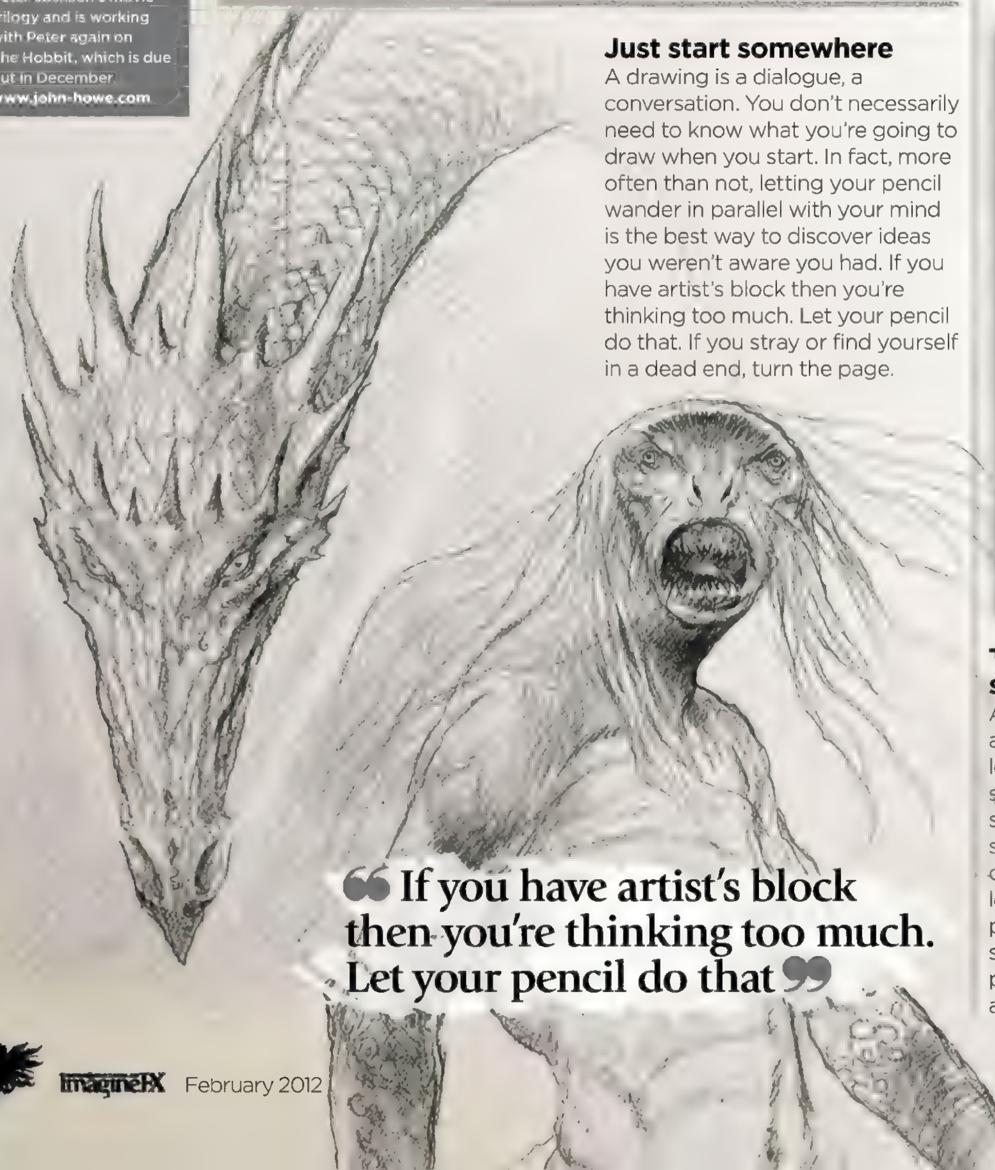
www.john-howe.com

The very nature of the sketch is incidental. It's a record of things observed and spaces explored, whether they're in front of you or in your head. Sketching an object can be a form of communion, a suspension of time and self. Sketching need not be useful, or not in the sense of being simply a preparation for a finished work. It can be – and should be – undertaken for its own sake. Photography can record a split second, but it can't automatically help us comprehend what we see in front of us.

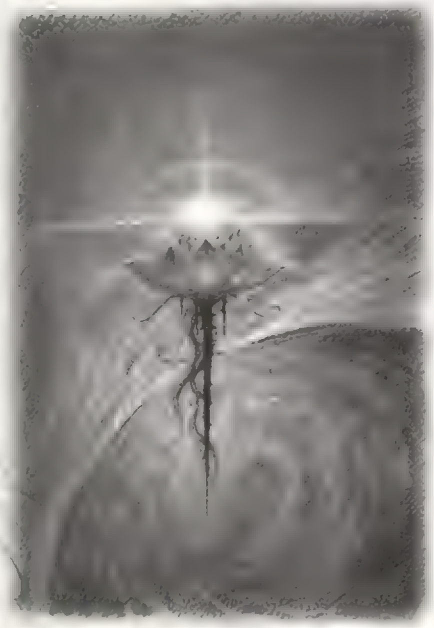
The sketch is the record of your grasp of what you've tried to draw, and while it's the destination that matters, the journey is the most important part. I've had a bit of practice of late: 2,000-odd sketches over the past two and a half years…

Just start somewhere

A drawing is a dialogue, a conversation. You don't necessarily need to know what you're going to draw when you start. In fact, more often than not, letting your pencil wander in parallel with your mind is the best way to discover ideas you weren't aware you had. If you have artist's block then you're thinking too much. Let your pencil do that. If you stray or find yourself in a dead end, turn the page.



> “If you have artist's block then you're thinking too much. Let your pencil do that”



Throw away that sharpener

Always choose a Stanley knife over a pencil sharpener. You want a lovely long point on your pencils, something that no mechanical sharpener can deliver. A perfectly symmetrical precision point isn't conducive to sketching and won't let you hold the pencil low to the paper. But hang on to that sharpener anyway – it can do in a pinch on long flights when knives are off-limits.

Loosen up

Don't grip that pencil until your knuckles are white and your fingers cramp. Loosen up. You need to feel the paper. You want the drawing to tell you as much as it can. Sudden ideas will spring from a chance coinciding of lines; be ready to embrace those opportunities. Sketching is a ménage à trois between you, your subject and the drawing, not a one-way monologue.

> "Sketching is a ménage à trois between you, your subject and the drawing"

Don't be afraid to break in a new sketchbook

If you're reluctant to do that first drawing on the first page in case you screw it up, there's a simple solution. Open the sketchbook in the middle and start there. That way, if it's awful, it'll be hidden among all the others. One among many, rather than a frontispiece.

The importance of the human form

The human form is an important study for the serious artist. Artists who can render the human form effectively have always been in demand. Da Vinci made drawings of groups of people he saw, to capture their postures and how they related to one another. This attention to the figure is part of what sets the great artists apart from the mediocre.

No ovals and squares, please

Eschew those manuals that break everything down into ovals and squares and rectangles. You don't need to dissect a real thing into abstract shapes to understand it. Look at your subject carefully: it'll tell you how best to grasp the volumes and set them out.

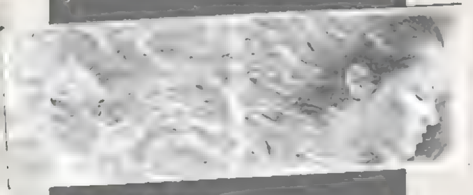
→→

DRAWING ESSENTIALS

Six core sketching tips from the master artist

No spiral bindings

Always prefer a hardbound sketchbook to a spiral-bound one. That way you won't dare tear out the sketches you don't like. Remember, it's not about making pretty pictures, they're just the record of what you've learned – or not – doing them. In retrospect, you may find the ones that didn't work to have taught you more than the ones that did. Besides, nobody's perfect – the odd crummy sketch just means that you're human.



Regular back-ups

While your sketchbook will easily store more or less forever a few gigabytes of greyscale TIFF files, it can go astray, get left on a train or in a departure lounge. Besides putting a "Please return to..." label inside, scan the contents every few weeks, just to be safe.

Avoid smudges

If an idea gets the better of you and that drawing ends up right across to the left-hand page, a light coat of fixative and possibly a sheet of rice paper will save you from smudging it.

You deserve the best

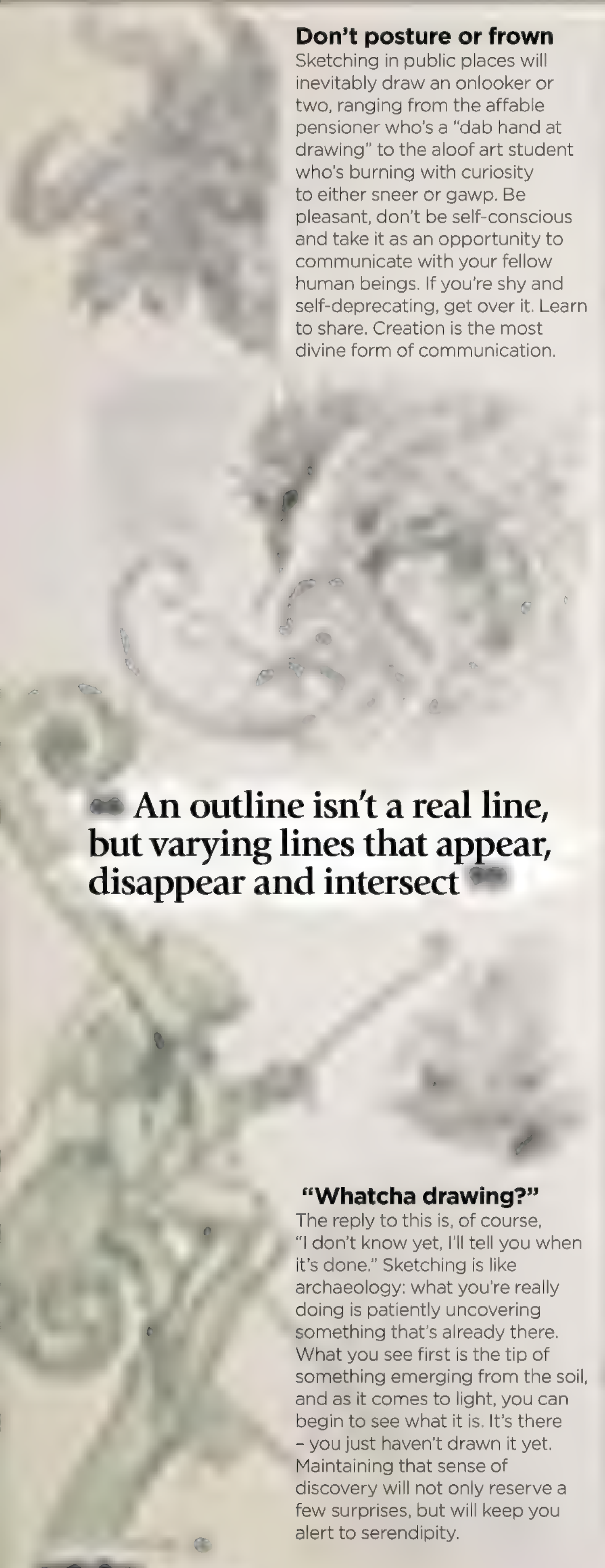
Get yourself a good-quality sketchbook; after all, it'll represent literally weeks of your creative life when you've filled it up. Acid-free cartridge paper, around 150 grams, is a good rule of thumb.

Always be ready

Your basic kit, which you can take everywhere with you (no excuses to go without): an A3 sketchbook, a pencil case with pencils, utility knife and erasers. Find a handy knapsack to fit them in, chuck in your diary (in case you feel like writing a bit) and your camera as well if there's room. Never go anywhere without it – you'll never be lost for something to do.

Look, no crumbs!

Kneadable or putty erasers are your best friends. Because they leave no eraser scraps, you can use them anywhere. Furthermore, you can model them into creative shapes and wee critters when you're bored. I make pretty decent mushrooms and snails.



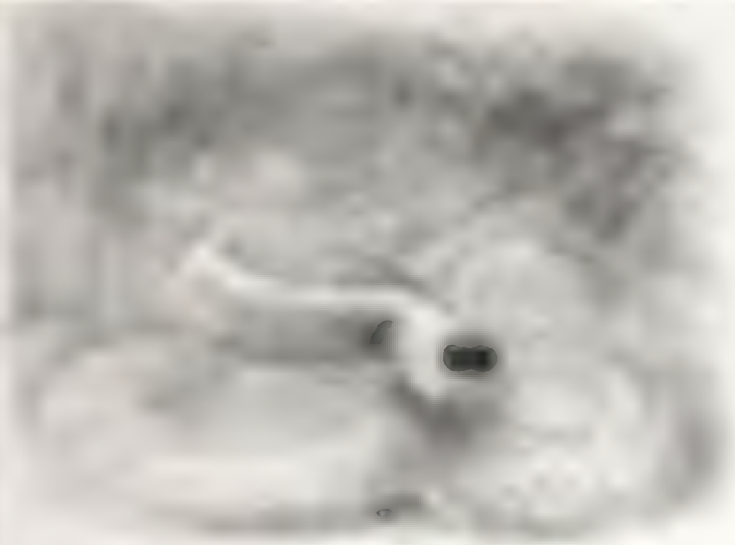
Don't posture or frown

Sketching in public places will inevitably draw an onlooker or two, ranging from the affable pensioner who's a "dab hand at drawing" to the aloof art student who's burning with curiosity to either sneer or gawp. Be pleasant, don't be self-conscious and take it as an opportunity to communicate with your fellow human beings. If you're shy and self-deprecating, get over it. Learn to share. Creation is the most divine form of communication.

> An outline isn't a real line, but varying lines that appear, disappear and intersect

"Whatcha drawing?"

The reply to this is, of course, "I don't know yet, I'll tell you when it's done." Sketching is like archaeology: what you're really doing is patiently uncovering something that's already there. What you see first is the tip of something emerging from the soil, and as it comes to light, you can begin to see what it is. It's there – you just haven't drawn it yet. Maintaining that sense of discovery will not only reserve a few surprises, but will keep you alert to serendipity.

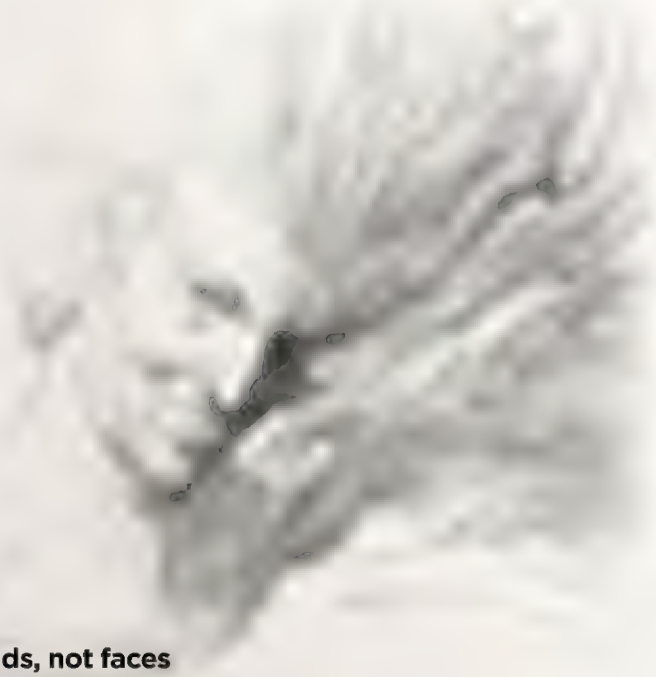


Getting a grip

Choose any other grip over the one that you use to write. Too many people confuse writing and drawing instruments (after all, a pencil is a pencil) and you may be using all the wrong reflexes, even the opposite side of the brain from what you should. It's complicated, but it explains why so many adults who would love to reconnect with the drawings they did while growing up simply can't.

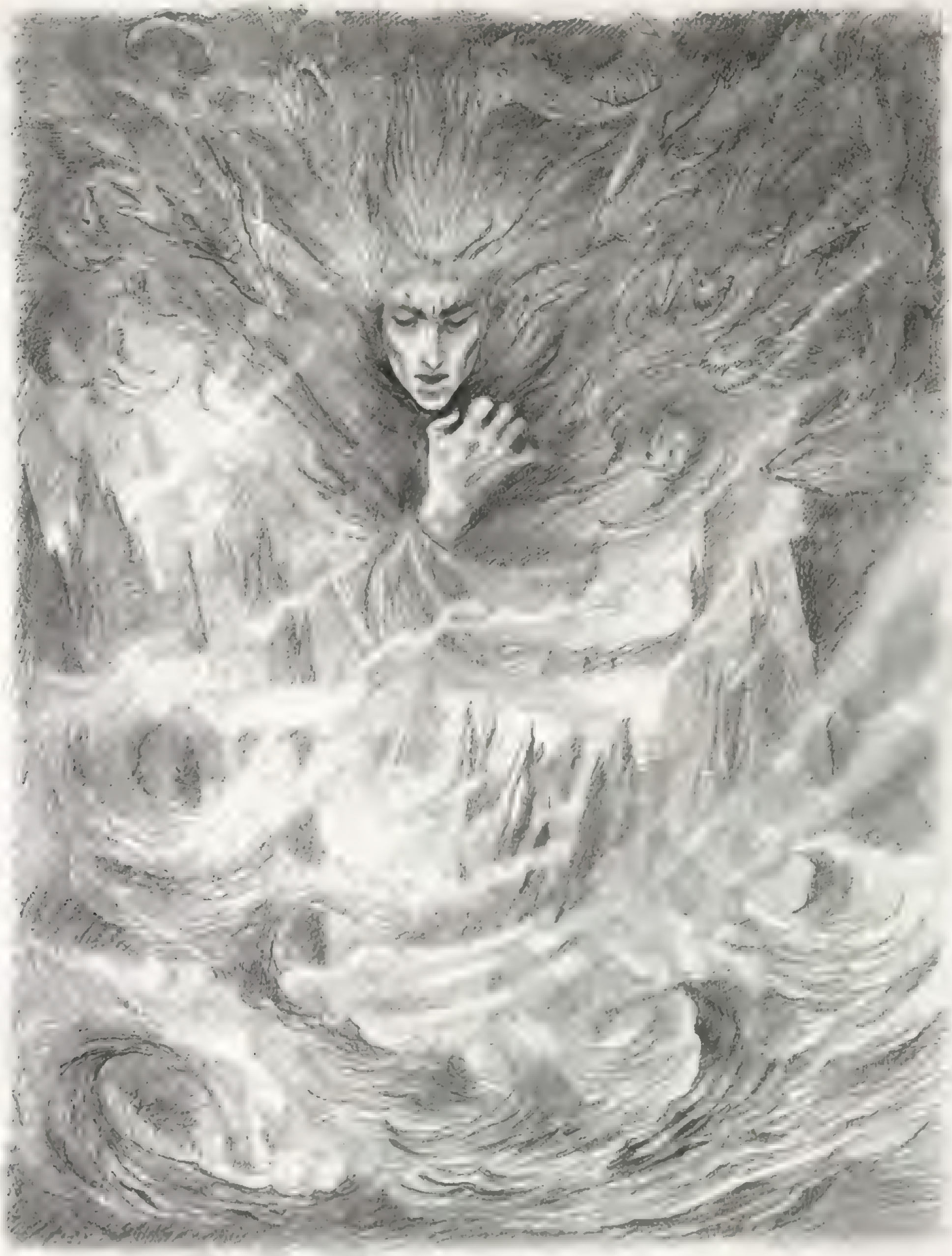
Lightly, lightly

Try to draw shapes and shadows, not lines. While an outline is a convenient artifice, nature doesn't use them. Try to think in terms of the volumes you're delineating. An outline isn't a real line, but a succession of varying lines that appear, disappear and intersect, and which is defined only by your point of view. If your line is too strong initially then the volumes themselves will be flattened.



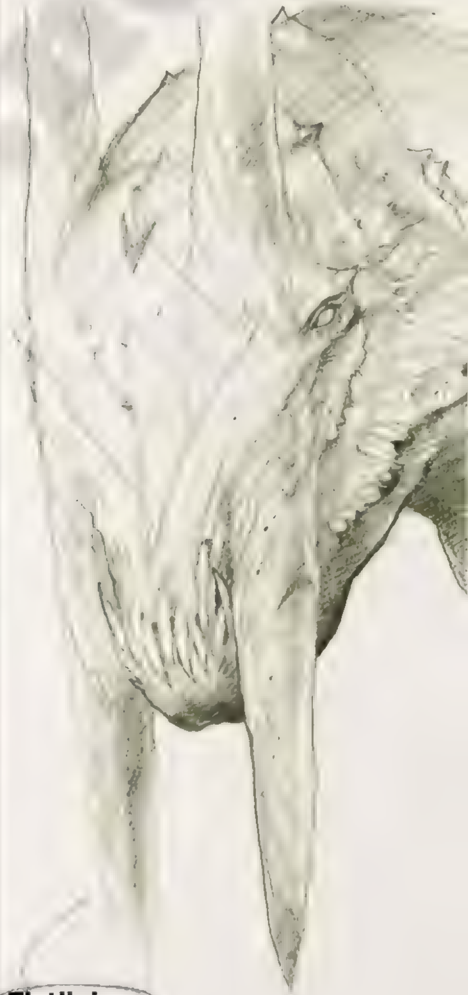
Heads, not faces

Mervyn Peake, in his wonderfully personal instructional booklet The Craft of the Lead Pencil, lamented that students often drew "faces, not heads". (Don't look for it; it's been tragically long out of print.) Be conscious of the volumes of the head. Approach it as a sculptor would: first the volumes, then the details. Practice makes perfect. Ask your friends and colleagues to contribute. Every face you draw from life will lend life to the faces of the characters you invent.



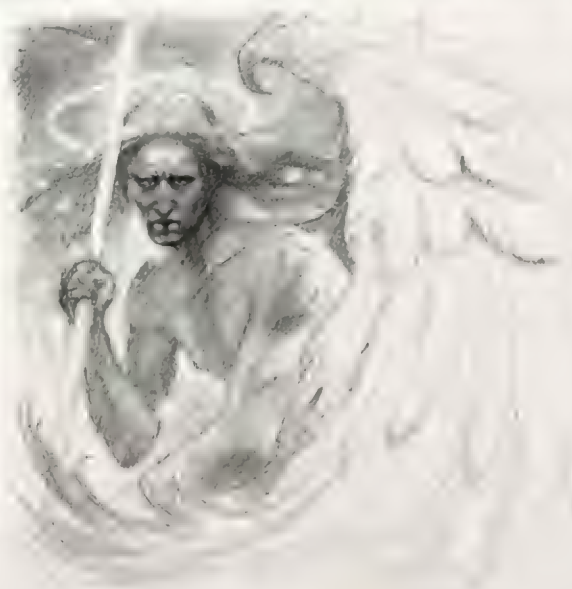
Artist's block

The only artist's blocks you need be concerned about are the ones stocked by your local art shop. If panic sets in when you're faced with a blank page, then you're trying too hard. It's not a blank page, it's a uniquely visual tri-dimensional, although geometrically flat, space and an ever-renewed opportunity to leave some trace of your thoughts and views. If you don't know what to draw, just start – lightly – somewhere, and things will begin to appear. You don't need to know what you're drawing to start.



Pentimento and palimpsest

Don't be precious or self-conscious about your sketches. Don't rub out what you don't like unless it's to draw something better on top. Those detours, changes of heart and direction, those sudden stray ideas that intrude in margins, are all part of a lively process. Don't try to pretty things up excessively, either; you're drawing for yourself, not for a potential audience. You want a record of your thoughts and skills, not some cleverly fashioned conceit. Keep your vanity at bay. The sketchbook is you, and should resemble you in all artistry and honesty.



Flatlining

I'm often asked what happens in my head when I draw. The answer is invariable: nothing. My head is empty of any conscious thought. Drawing is as close to meditation as you can get without sitting cross-legged in a temple and still have a pretty sketch to show for it. It's intuitive. Turn the world off; it's just you and what you see, whether it's in your head or out in front of your eyes.

Painter & Photoshop

RECAST A CLASSIC COMIC CHARACTER

How do you paint a compassionate portrait of DC's villainous Harley Quinn? Rocksteady concept artist **Kan Muftic** shows how it's done

The world of DC's heroes and villains is incredibly rich, offering a fantastic variety of interesting characters for any artist. Having the privilege to work on such exciting characters on a daily basis would turn me into a 10-year-old boy every time I sat down at my desk at Rocksteady Studios.

Working on countless concepts for Batman: Arkham City has taught me one thing, though: you can't just go in and mess around with these guys. Some of them have been around for 70 years and the world's finest comic book artists and illustrators have contributed to their evolution.

In this workshop, I'll paint a portrait of Harley Quinn. She's famous for her extreme mannerisms and affection for Joker. What I aim to do is contrast this image and present her more personal side. I pick a moment when she's on her own, lost in her thoughts. The events of Arkham City are dramatic and the love of her life, Joker, is terribly ill. She's changing her outfit and gearing up for her upcoming mission.

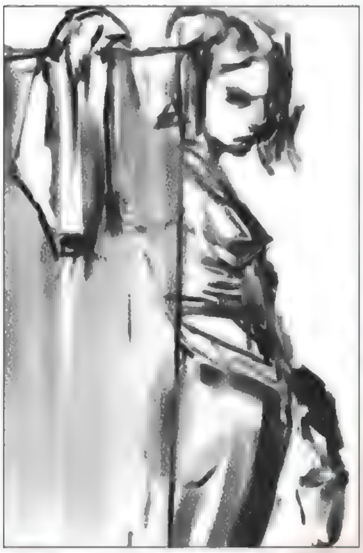
Artist **PROFILE**

Kan Muftic

COUNTRY: England

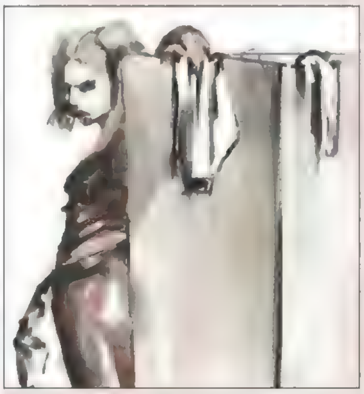
Kan is a concept artist and illustrator with extensive experience in the video game, film, advertising and music industries.

www.bit.ly/kanm



1 Composition

If you want to tell a story with your image, you have to spend time exploring the composition. In Painter, I take the idea of Harley changing outfits and start roughly sketching some ideas. I don't want to make a pretty drawing here (I never go into any detail at this stage). I sketch several versions to explore different ideas, angles and poses. At this stage, once I've created a few sketches, I line them up and submit them for approval.



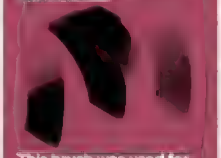
2 Sketching out

The first sketch has the strongest impact, so I crop the image and double the size (Canvas>Resize>Width 200 Percent) while making sure the Constrain File Size box is checked. Next I start picking colours and laying them straight down on the first and only layer of my painting. It's a bit unconventional but I have a good reason for doing this; it keeps me focused, while improving my skills for painting edges and exploring colours. I've found that when working with many layers it's easy to drift away in an endless game of options, and of trial and error. Working with a single layer forces you to carefully think through and commit to chosen colours and structures.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

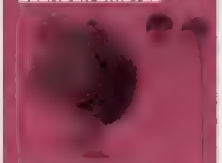
PAINTER

STANDARD BRUSHES OIL PASTEL

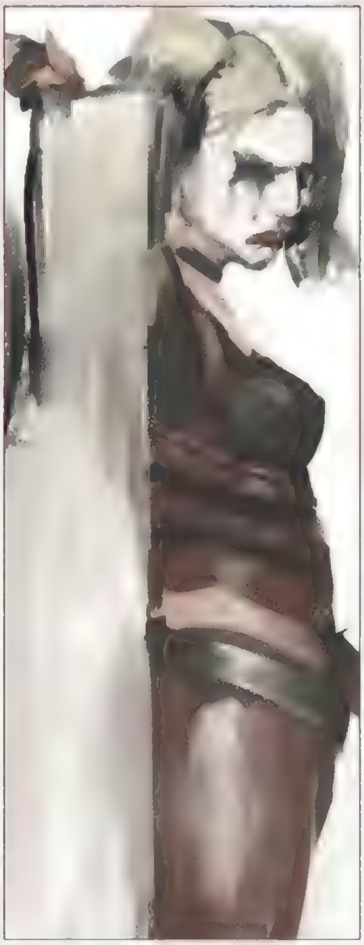


This brush was used for 99 per cent of this piece.

BLENDER BRISTLE



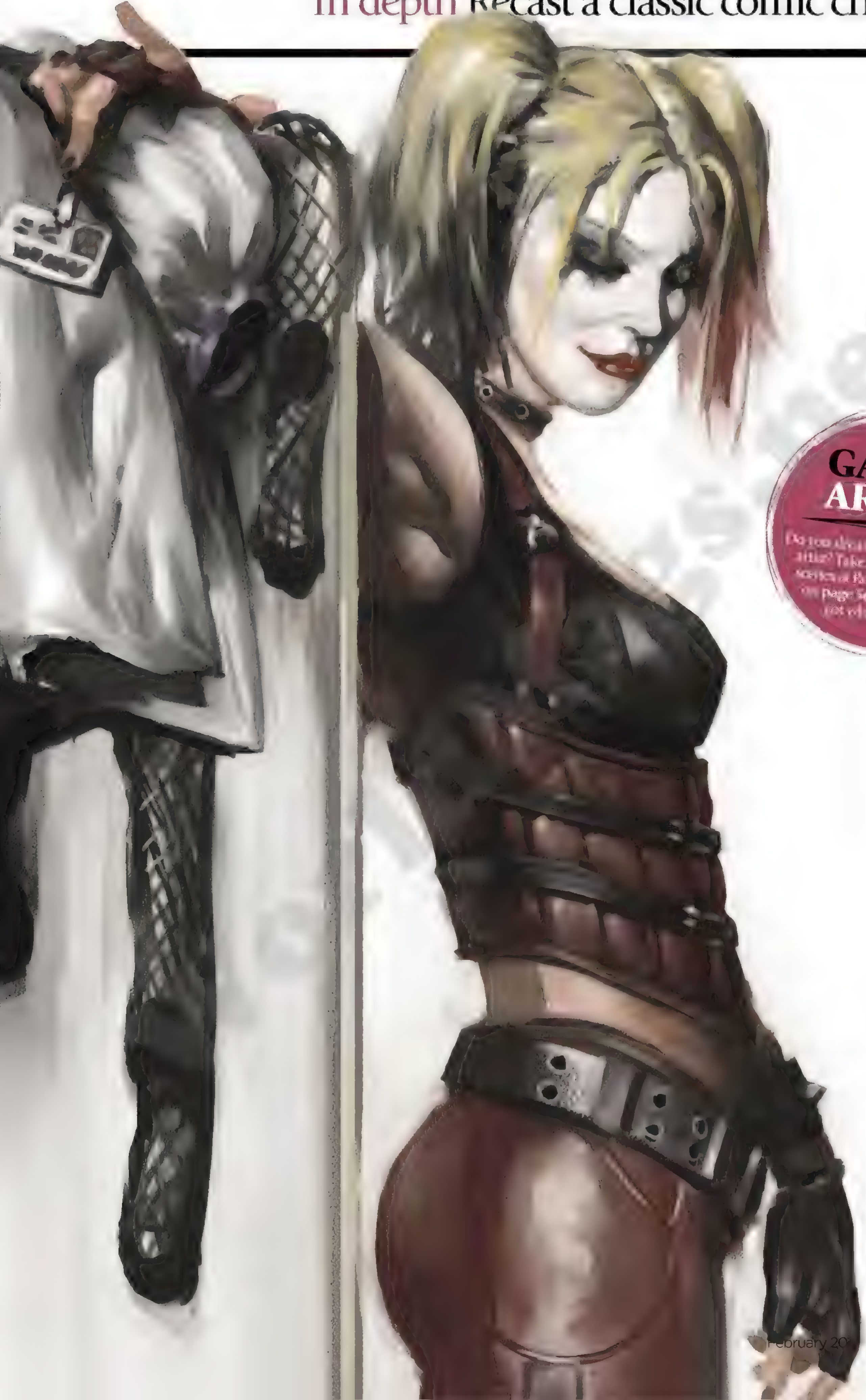
Another favourite of mine, this creamy darling makes digital look traditional.



3 Following design and adding elements

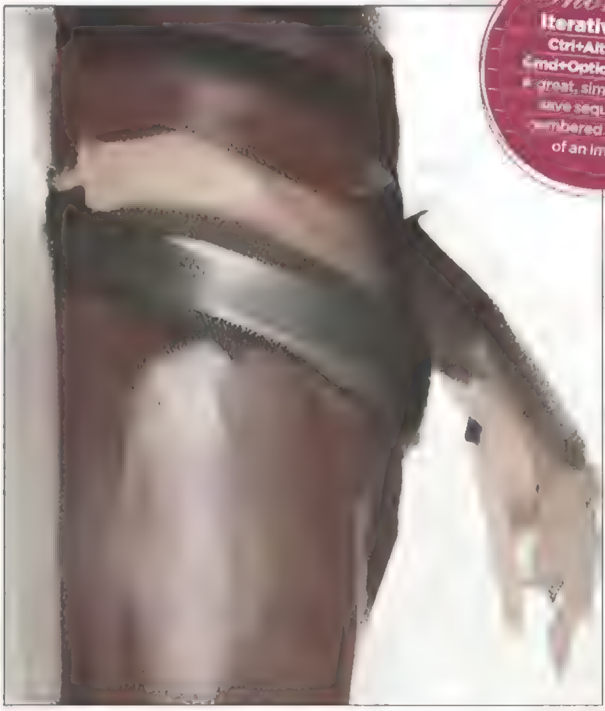
I block in some basic design elements of the costume, adding smudged mascara to her face, which gives subtle hints to the game's background story. I also roughly add some other elements to the sketch. These will be detailed later. I only wish to position them at this point. I think it's important to avoid fleshing things out too early because at this stage it should still be about exploration and playing with the paint.

➔



GAMES ARTIST

Do you dream of being a concept artist? Take a look behind the scenes at Rocksteady Studios on page 56 to see if you've got what it takes.

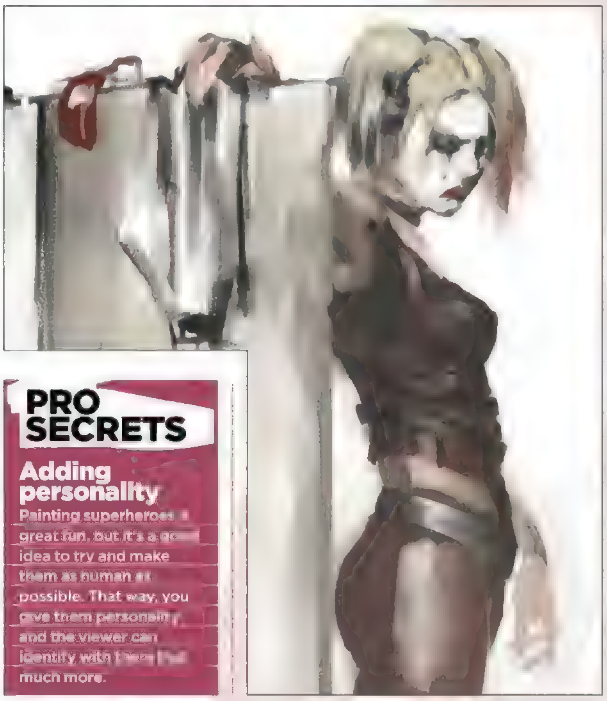


4 Cropping and blocking in

I decided that the image has too much space opposite Harley so I crop it. Remember, in visual storytelling, composition is king. My Oil Pastels are working a treat and I'm producing some wonderful edges, even at this rough stage. When I use Oil Pastels, I make long, broad strokes across the canvas. It's a very therapeutic process.

5 Moving things around

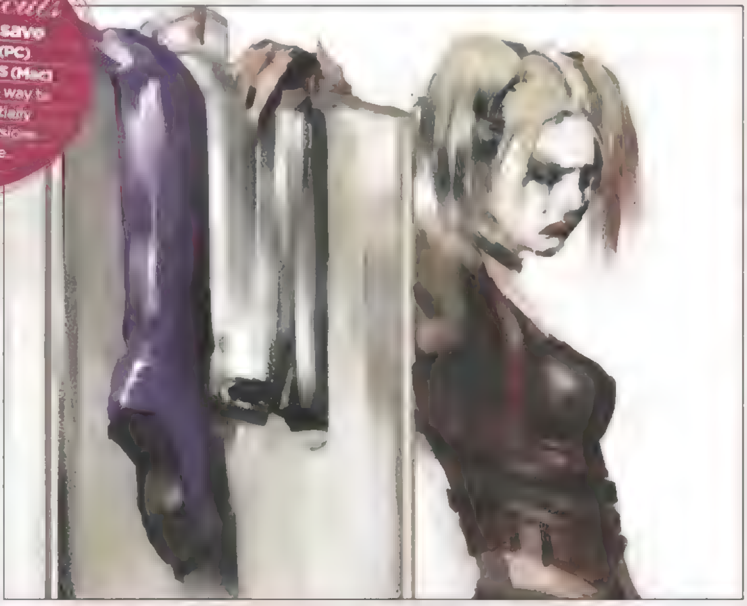
I realise I have to make some changes. I find that once you start putting down colours it's hard to go back and work on your composition again. But it may be necessary if I don't go back now and get things right. Using the Lasso tool I select the left part of the image and move it away. I then block in Harley's missing shape, which reveals more of her costume.



PRO SECRETS

Adding personality

Painting superheroes is great fun, but it's a good idea to try and make them as human as possible. That way, you give them personality and the viewer can identify with them that much more.



Shortcuts

Iterative save

Ctrl+Alt+S (PC)

Cmd+Option+S (Mac)

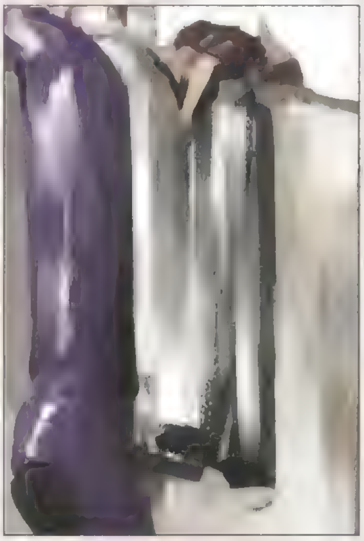
A great, simple way to save sequentially numbered versions of an image.

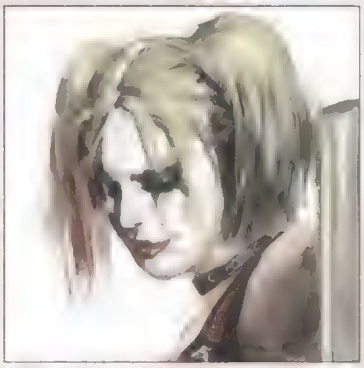
6 Fleshing out

I feel like I'm on the right track at this point, so I decide to enlarge the image. The reason for this is that I still want to work in swooshy strokes even in the detailed areas, and not fall into the habit of scribbling minor details of the picture. I start fleshing things out and add Harley's purple boot that she used to wear in Arkham Asylum. Purple gives a nice touch to the overall palette of this piece.

7 Putting it all together

From here on I work on the smaller elements of the figure and the environment. I try not to zoom in because I don't want to lose the overview of the image. I have enough colours on the canvas, so I can pick them instead of mixing them from scratch. Still, every stroke is bold and confident. It's crucial to place your strokes into each other instead of scratching them in or carefully placing them next to each other.



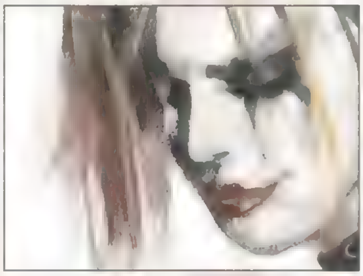


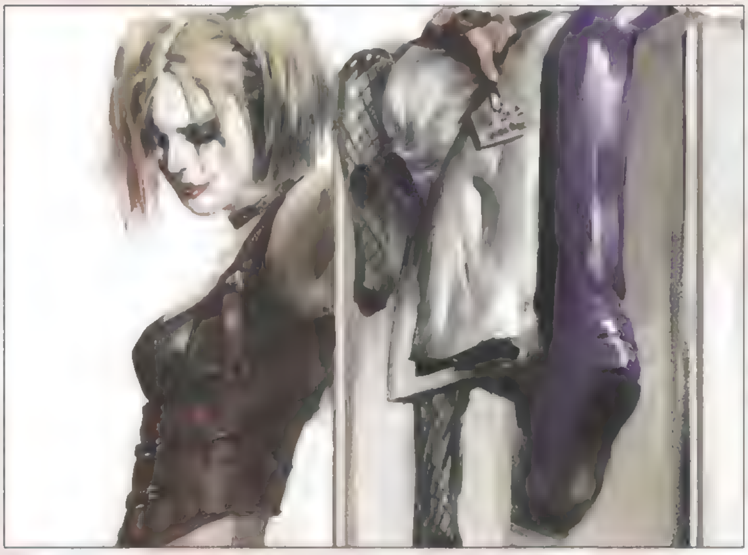
8 Facial expression

I add a cheeky little smile on her face. She looked too angry and slightly out of character before. Again, thinking of the overall story of the image always helps you come up with interesting details. I'm still relaxed and my arm moves loosely across my tablet, even when I'm creating intricate details such as the character's face. Strangely, I produce better strokes when I just let go.

9 Edge economy

This fancy term – edge economy – refers to the relationship between the soft and sharp edges in a painting. Using Pen Pressure, I create sharp edges and, as I slowly lift my pen up, the edges become soft. Here you can see an example of edge economy in Harley's hair.



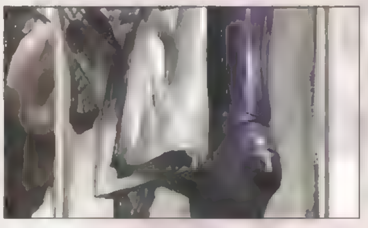


10 Stockings

These were an iconic part of Harley's outfit in the first game, Batman: Arkham Asylum. As I start blocking them in here, I realise that I've never painted stockings before. It's a delicate material with a flexible shape, so it's not easy to get it right. I try searching for some references online, but find surprisingly few pictures of loose-hanging stockings. It becomes rather draining browsing through loads of irrelevant and obscene images to get to the right one. I don't have time to get some real-life reference so I just try to use logic and make it up.

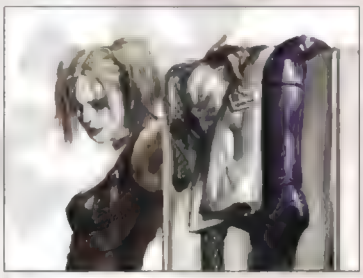
11 The boot

I put some details into Harley's boot design while trying not to destroy it because I like how the edges look so far. The material is smooth and shiny, so I use some nice specular reflections to make it pop. I try to ensure the boot looks and feels different from the cloth next to it.



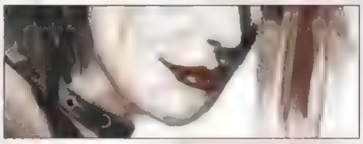
12 Boost up the contrast

I quickly switch to Photoshop and add an Adjustment Layer (Layer>New Adjustment Layer>Levels). I push the contrast up by moving the outer sliders to both ends of the 'black waves' that represent tonal information. This could also be done in Painter, using the Equalise function, but I find Photoshop more accessible for this stage.



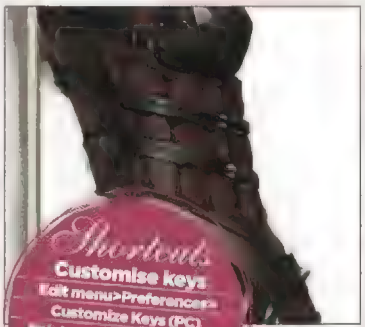
13 More details

I change Harley's smile to look a bit more natural and add some details such as black nails that help flesh out her character a bit more.



14 Corset

Having enriched my image with contrast, I switch back to Painter and pick some creamy Blender Bristle brushes from the Artists' Oils menu. They're great for rendering leathery surfaces and skin, so I zoom in a bit and start working on the structure of Harley's corset. This is one of the most difficult and time-consuming parts of the process and it shows just how important it is to do a lot of drawing of all kinds of things from life.



Shortcuts

Customise keys

Edit menu>Preferences>Customize Keys (PC)

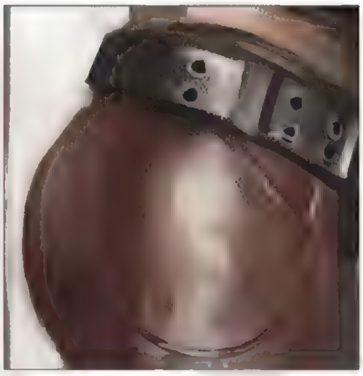
Painter menu>Preferences>Customize Keys (Mac)

Assign your tools to [illegible]

PRO SECRETS

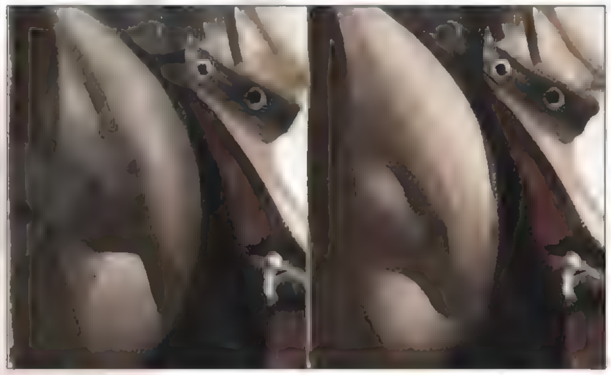
Seek feedback

If you're getting paid to draw, that means you're not drawing for yourself but for your client. Send back a lot of progress shots and request extensive feedback. That way you make sure everyone is happy and you don't need to change much of your piece as you go along.



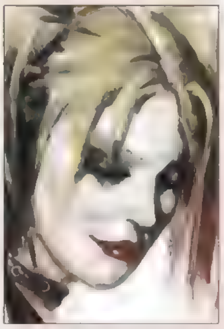
15 Highlights

Clever positioning of highlights and their edges can make or break an image. That's why it's important to know what materials you apply the highlight to. In this case, I have a leather corset and that means that I can't just add some random specular reflections. The surface of this material has a texture that absorbs parts of light and doesn't reflect it as metal, for example. So, my highlights are slightly smudged and muted, which gives the impression of leather.



16 The armpit saga

Up until now it's been easy getting her posture, the facial expression and the colours right, but I've been delaying working on this area… until now. It's time to solve the difficult armpit/shoulder area. And I know I'll struggle because I'm not exactly sure what the arm looks like behind the obstacle. This is one of those moments where I regret not doing more figure drawing from life. I push paint around, trying to find something that'll look right. If you get stuck, I do some proper research, shoot some reference photos or ask someone to pose for you. It sounds like a lot of work but it takes more time to struggle with the mistakes you make along the way.



17 The face

After having spent too much time painting the armpit, I move on to her face. This is the most interesting part for me: I find faces to be challenging but rewarding if you get them right. Even though I zoom in, the strokes are still placed on top of each other loosely. Her face needs more form, but I have to keep her looking young and pretty. A delicate touch is the key here. Sculpting the paint gently gives me the result I'm looking for.

18 Outside intervention

Just as I'm finishing, my art director asks me to crop the image, so that Harley Quinn's costume more accurately represents the one she wears in Batman: Arkham City. I'm happy to do this if it means the image is more up to date. And I'm sure Harley wouldn't mind… ●

From Start to Finish.

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX

Reviews

Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

11 PRODUCTS ON TEST

LUMIX
G
LUMIX

MEET THE MASTERS.
Watch it. Learn it. Do it.
Wacom MasterClass Vol. 1
Wacom MasterClass Vol. 2
Wacom MasterClass Vol. 3
wacom

HARDWARE

104 Lumix DMC-G3
Panasonic's latest D-SLR features a twisting, touch-sensitive LCD screen – perfect for taking reference photos of awkward areas.

BOOKS

106 New reads
Rebus; The Art of Puss in Boots; The Explorer's Guide to Drawing Fantasy Creatures.

TRAINING

107 Meet the Masters: Volumes 1-3
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108 New movies
Troll Hunter; Conan the Barbarian; Vanishing on 7th Street.

TROLL HUNTER

VIDEO GAMES

110 New games
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword; The Lord of the Rings: War in the North; Rayman Origins.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ✍✍✍✍✍ Magnificent ✍✍✍✍ Good ✍✍✍ Ordinary ✍✍ Poor ✍ Atrocious

A good camera can ease your workflow and add to your creativity.

Some of the control buttons aren't as well-placed as the ones on the G2 and GF1.

Use buttons or touch to navigate the Quick Menu and adjust the most important settings quickly.

Lumix DMC-G3

TOUCH OF CLASS A versatile 15.93 million-pixel compact system camera with a twisting, touch-sensitive LCD screen

Price £480 with 14-42mm lens **Company** Panasonic **Web** www.panasonic.co.uk **Contact** +44 (0) 844 844 3899

The articulated joint is a big help for creative or covert photography.

Choosing a camera to use in your workflow can be tricky. It will need to fulfil a variety of functions, from macro photos to use as custom textures, to reference shots taken the instant you get inspired.

The compact system camera (CSC) is a good option. It's a do-all setup first introduced to the market by Panasonic, and the G3 reviewed here is part of its latest generation of smaller cameras that accept interchangeable lenses. It sits near the top of the company's line-up, just below the GH2.

Unlike many CSCs the G3 has a viewfinder built-in, so images can be composed in this, or on the 3-inch 460,000 dot LCD. Although the viewfinder is electronic, it provides a clear view (if rather digitised) and it's useful in very bright light when the main screen can be hard to see.

The screen is mounted on an articulating hinge, which makes it easy to compose shots from a variety of

PUTTING THE COMPETITION IN FOCUS

Here's how Panasonic's new DMC-G3 measures up against its rivals.

OLYMPUS E-PL2

A retro-styled 12.3Mp Micro Four Thirds camera, lacking a built-in EVF, but with the popular Art Filter modes.
Price: £470 (with kit lens).

SAMSUNG NX11

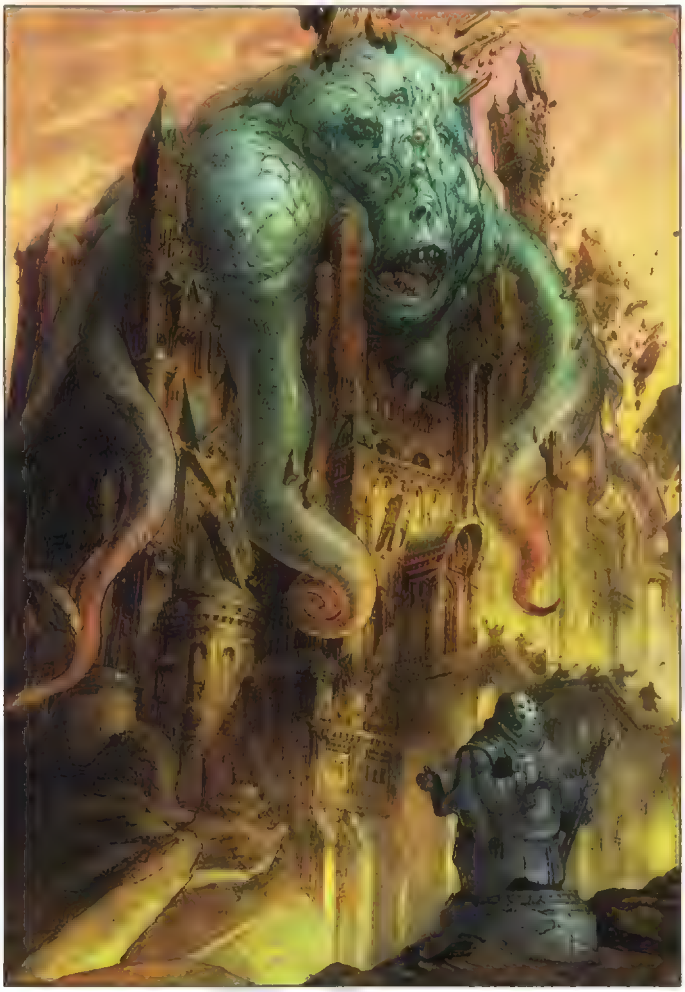
The 14.6Mp NX11 supports Samsung's i-Function lens system and a high-quality EVF, and is neat and easy.
Price: £459 (with kit lens).

PANASONIC GF2

The 12.1Mp GF2 has a great build and design, but lacks some of the G3's direct controls and ease of use.
Price: £400 (with kit lens).

Web-based picture searches are okay, but taking your own specific reference photos is best.

Sean A Murray used his photos as reference for this painting, giving his environment detail authenticity.



> **The G3 is a great camera, made even better by the touch-sensitive screen**

angles. This combines well with the screen's touch-sensitivity. There's also a Touch AF mode, which enables an autofocus (AF) point to be set by finger on screen, and Touch Shutter mode, in which the camera is triggered to focus and take a shot, again, with a touch of the screen. Both functions come in very handy.

As well as being easy to use, with plenty of control, the G3 produces impressive images. Its autofocus, white balance and exposure systems perform well and there's little coloured noise visible in JPEG images taken across the sensitivity range, ISO 160-6400. Shots taken at ISO 1600 or above are a little softer than those taken at lower settings though.

With great image quality aided by a variety of interchangeable lenses, the G3 is a great camera for all needs that's made even better by the touch sensitive, adjustable screen.

DETAILS

Features

- [illegible]
- [illegible]
- [illegible]
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- [illegible]
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Rating

[illegible]

TOUCHSCREEN

Touchscreens can be resistive or capacitive. The latter are glass panels coated in conductive material – skin conducts electricity, so the screen detects touch. Resistive screens are made up of plastic layers – when two of these meet after pressure from a finger or stylus, there's an electrical connection and the touch is registered. The G3's screen is resistive, but you won't often have to jab it repeatedly.

MOTION PIC. SET
AVCHD/SH
SELECT

SEAN A MURRAY

How a good camera can enhance your artwork and research

What camera do you use?
I use either a Canon Rebel EOS XT, when I'm prepared, or my iPhone camera, when I'm not.

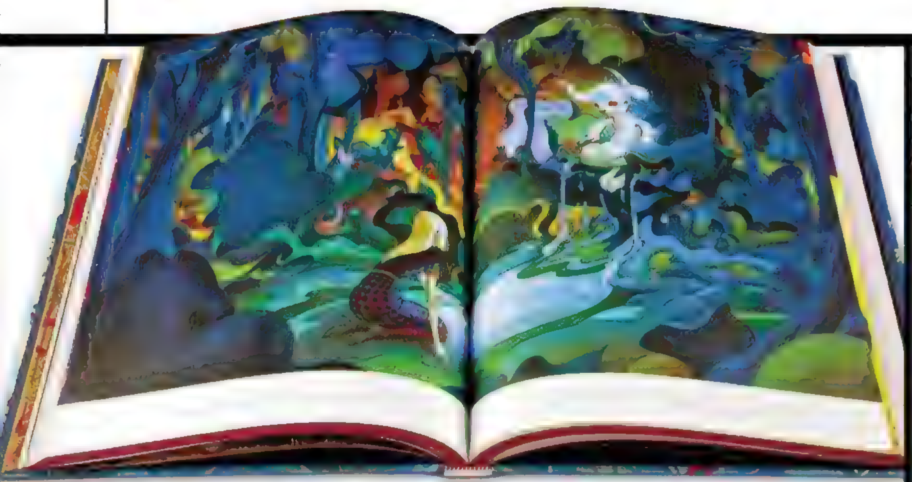
When should photos be used?
For concept art, it's more acceptable to use photos from any source, since the goal is not necessarily to be published. But if it is published and you've used a photo without copyright permission it can be an issue. With illustration, since the work is generally meant to be published, it's expected to be original. Illustrators use photos and if they're your own it's okay to use them. If they aren't your photos, you need to use them in such a way that they're totally unrecognisable, like a small piece of a photo for a surface texture effect.

How do you use your photos?
I use photos for reference and inspiration. If I'm out and about, on vacation or in an interesting place, I like to record things I see and add them to my visual databank. I've integrated photos into concept pieces, but I usually regret it because it makes my work feel stiff. There are many talented digital artists who rely heavily on photos and do it beautifully – it's just not something I'm able to incorporate into my process, which probably makes me a bit slower. But as Dermot Power explained to me, drawing and painting clouds helps you understand *why* they look like battleships, and you can use that power to help tell the story.

How important is it to take your own photos?
For reference images, it's only important if I can't find decent photos. Pictures on the web generally tend to feature subject matter that's easily searchable. For the Arthur Rackham tutorial piece (ImagineFX issue 78), I had a hard time finding pictures of gnarly old trees online, so I used my camera.

Sean is a lead concept artist at Big Huge Games/38 Studios. He's working on Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning.

www.seanandrewmurray.com



Rebus

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE The DC and Prada artist presents a decade's worth of beautiful, twisted fantasies

Author James Jean **Publisher** Chronicle Books **Price** £30
Web www.chroniclebooks.com **Available** Now

"In 2001, I was twenty-one years old, just graduated from art school, and living in Brooklyn," notes James Jean in his conclusion to Rebus. "Through the windows of my loft, I witnessed the collapse of the Twin Towers." Jean goes on to say that the events of 11 September made his paintings and art feel "insignificant".

In the ten years since, Jean has worked tirelessly to find meaning in his work. And Rebus stands as a convincing argument that he has. He's worked for DC comics – designing covers for its Fables series – as well as Prada, ESPN and Atlantic Records. Rebus is a compendium of the artist's work, with the focus on personal projects rather than commercial ones, although it does feature murals and wallpapers that he created for Prada.

Jean's work is arranged in chapters covering his various thematic and stylistic periods, beginning with Kindling, his first solo show in 2008. Kindling investigates cannabalism, self-mutilation and paraphilia in lovingly rendered, if disturbing, images. A man is cracked open by a little girl to reveal frogs in place of internal organs. A woman with a head made of butterflies admires herself in the mirror.

From here, Jean takes us on a voyage around his other art. His Prada projects are noticeably – and understandably - less nightmarish than his more personal works. They remain impressive and intricately detailed nonetheless, sometimes spreading over eight pages to remind you just how big they are.

It's in his other projects that Jean is at his most interesting and challenging, though, frequently colliding Hayao Miyazaki-like animals and insects with Francis Bacon-esque disassembled humans. His 2002-2004 compilation Recess is the most disturbing, with young children looking blankly on as a mad teacher removes a kid's heart, and a naked woman lynched on a school bus.

What's most striking about Jean's work is his ability to work in numerous mediums and always provide interesting and powerful creations. The majority of his paintings are created traditionally in either acrylic or oils, but he has ventured into Photoshop for others. His works are noticeably categorised into different styles, such as pop-art or strikingly surreal landscapes, but the themes of death, children and nature always recur.

Rebus is an interesting overview of a man who can reference bodily horror one minute, and 1980s computer games the next. Jean needn't have worried about his work being insignificant: this book is testament to one of the most significant artists of the century.

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

Further reading…

Follow the adventures of a furry hero, and learn how to draw beguiling beasts

The Art of Puss in Boots

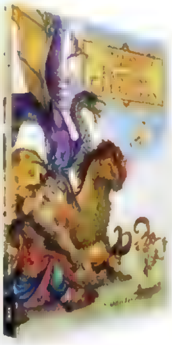
Author Ramin Zahed
Publisher Titan Books **Price** £25
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍

Although easily dismissable as a mere children's film, a lot of care and attention has gone into Shrek spin-off Puss in Boots, as is evidenced by this classy 'Art of…' book. Inside, the author covers the making of the film, including character design, locations, and the difficulties of making CGI milk flow out of a pan.

The Art of Puss in Boots certainly doesn't pander to Puss in Boots' demographic, either. Executive producer Guillermo Del Toro contributes a brief introduction, and as a whole it's a wordy piece of work that name-checks Frederico Fellini and Francisco Goya. A pivotal scene is explored from basic sketch to final render, but the most interesting of all is a fold-out "visual script", which breaks the film's three acts into their colour schemes.

The Explorer's Guide to Drawing Fantasy Creatures

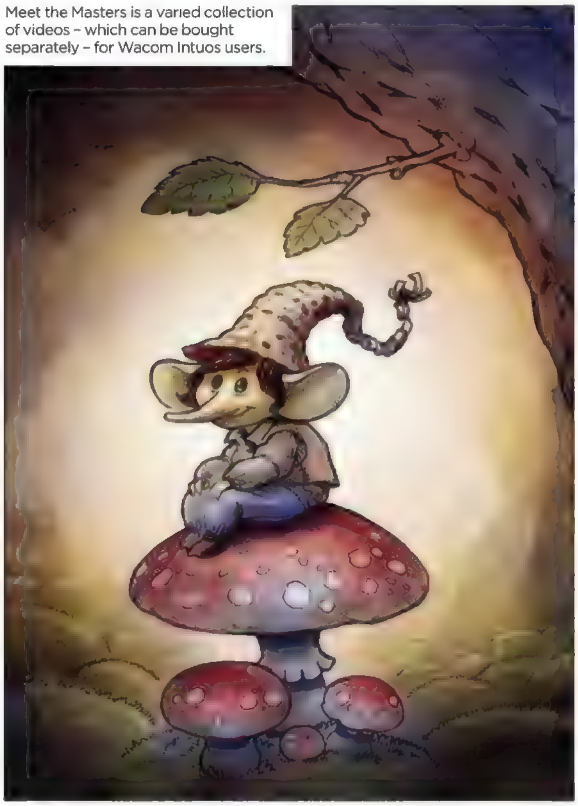
Author Emily Fiegenschuh
Publisher Impact Books **Price** £20
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍½

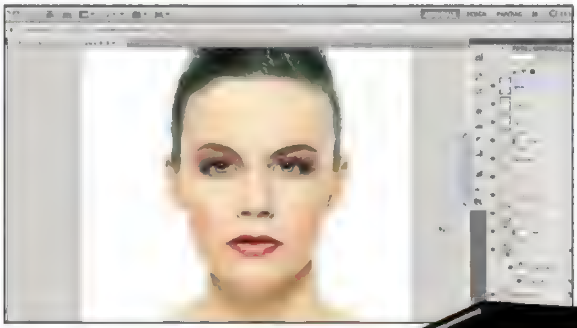


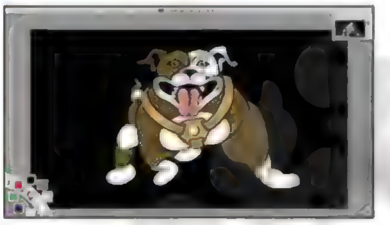
Emily Fiegenschuh's charming how-to guide introduces us to a new world of strange creatures and, most importantly, shows us how to create them. It's a cute approach and one that encompasses everything from stately antelopes to heroic humanoids and a haunting living island.

Every process of creating creatures is broken down, from initial sketches to the final, full-colour artwork. Fiegenschuh concentrates on a pencil-and-paper approach, with the emphasis on creating lively and pugnacious characters. At times it feels a little too much like self-promotion, but anyone wishing to learn the basics of fantasy art will find a lot of inspiration and tips here. ●

Meet the Masters is a varied collection of videos – which can be bought separately – for Wacom Intuos users.







MEET THE MASTERS.
Watch it. Learn it. Do it.
wacom

The videos feature advice from Angie Taylor, Daniel Lieske, Uli Staiger and Steve Caplin. However, coverage is broad and, as such, is more useful for beginners.

Meet the Masters: Volumes 1-3

TAKING THE TABLETS Four artists show you how to use your tablet with every creative app under the sun in this monster set from Wacom

Publishers Wacom and video2brain **Price** £70 (DVD); $100 (Download) **Web** http://de.shop.wacom.eu and www.video2brain.com

Produced by the video training specialist video2brain on Wacom's behalf, Meet the Masters is a wide-ranging collection of videos covering the most-used creative applications, with the idea of helping you make the most of your Wacom Intuos tablet.

The complete set is included with selected Intuos4 bundles, but you can buy the full set, or individual volumes, yourself if you already own a tablet. See the How to Buy box for details.

While the buying options are complicated, the premise of the videos themselves couldn't be more straightforward. Artists Angie Taylor, Daniel Lieske, Uli Staiger and Steve Caplin take turns to walk you through a specific application, showing how to produce creative projects with your tablet's help. Volume 1 provides tips for retouching photos in Photoshop, Photoshop Lightroom and Aperture; Volume 2 offers crash courses in digital art in Photoshop, Painter and Illustrator; and Volume 3 focuses on 3D and motion graphics in Photoshop, ZBrush and After Effects. (SketchBook Pro is also included in the 3D volume, which is a stretch.)

The presentation of all the videos is first-rate, with an application to help you navigate the volumes and their respective chapters. (You'd think a collection called Meet the Masters would make it clearer who is narrating which video, though.) Where Meet the Masters falls down as a purchase is that its coverage is so broad. Daniel Lieske's section on digital art, for example, walks through the whole process of creating a painting from scratch without really exploring anything in detail – useful for beginners, but not for the type of experienced artist you'd expect to be investing in a tablet.

Meet the Masters works better as a classy introduction to working with tablets. If you've just bought your first, the videos will certainly help you become productive quickly. But the concept works better as a high-class freebie with your tablet than as a separate investment in training.

DETAILS

Topics covered

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Length

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Rating

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HOW TO BUY

The various buying options for Meet the Masters are a little bit complicated. Wacom is offering the training video for free with selected Intuos4 tablets. Wacom is also offering DVD editions of Meet the Masters, with the three volumes selling for £27 each or the full collection selling for £70.

You can also buy the same videos at **www.video2brain.com**, where they're labelled as Wacom MasterClass: Volumes 1-3. You can download each video set, or stream them from the website to watch through any web browser. Each volume is available for $40, while the complete collection costs $100.

http://de.shop.wacom.eu
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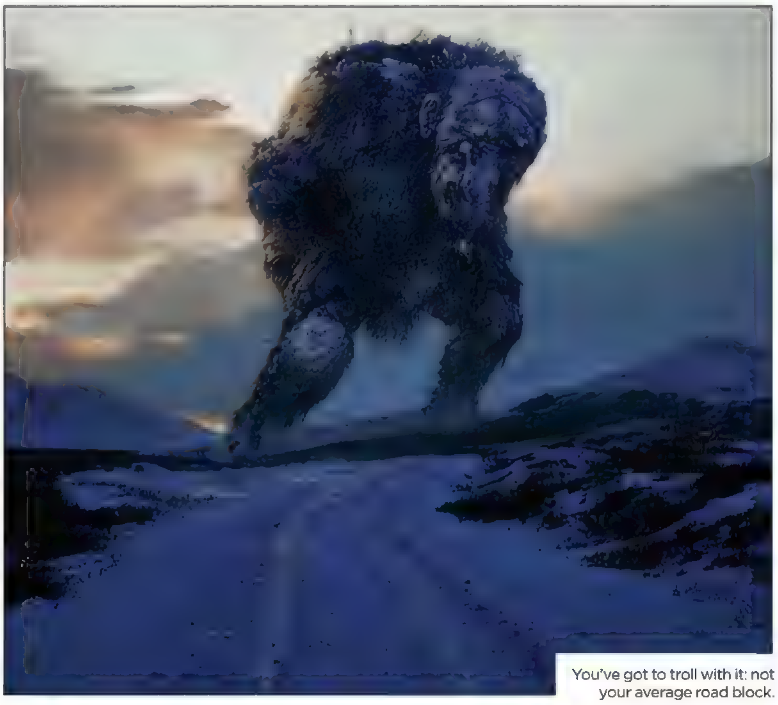

You've got to troll with it: not your average road block.

Troll Hunter

BIG MYSTERY Even if you can't smell the blood of a Christian, you'll be impressed by these pagan stalwarts

Distributor Momentum Pictures **Certificate** 15 **Price** £18 (Blu-ray £20) **Available** 9 January 2012

Norwegian director André Øvredal has given the mockumentary a nose-full of smelling salts in Troll Hunter, a believably rough and ready take on Scandinavian tall stories.

A group of students investigate a string of livestock deaths, blamed on wild bears by plain-clothes government officials eager to move the students along. The real culprits are ancient trolls: sluggish and curmudgeonly, possessing a range of emotions, who experience pain when ultraviolet light calcifies them into stone, and who'd really rather be left alone.

TROLL HUNTER

We meet Hans (Otto Jespersen), a government-appointed troll hunter, disenchanted with his 24-hour job as regulator of the massive beasts. Initially apprehensive, the surly monosyllabic Wyatt Earp of the piece shows the students what they want – a window into his endless, eerie nights keeping the reality of trolls from the waking world.

And the trolls are fantastic. Retaining the bulbous nose and lofty appeal of early 20th century troll illustrator Theodor Kittelsen, contemporary Norwegian artist Håvard Johansen adds an organic quality that remains intact in the finished screen creatures, especially in the Raglefant (have a look at his exclusive sketches on page 22).

There's a sustained tone of a kid's story that's played for adults, and played straight. Details of the mythology crop up as we're given an evolutionary back-story to three-headed trolls, and hear a scientist explain why they explode in sunlight.

Øvredal doesn't allow the wealth of myth to overpower his story. We may see a sly reference to The Billy Goats Gruff, as Hans lures a bridge troll out with a goat, but it's still only there to support the film's tale – and it's one filled with original scares, dark humour and suitable clout.

RATING ✍✍✍✍

Also look at…

A classic fantasy hero done badly and a horror flick that will probably vanish

Conan the Barbarian

Distributor Lionsgate
Certificate 15
Price £15 Blu-ray Double Play (2D & 3D)
Available Now
RATING ✍✍

Proving set-piece action scenes are no substitute for character development, this new adaptation of the classic Robert E Howard books fails to deliver.

The warlord, Khalar Zym (Avatar's Stephen Lang) and his witch daughter Marique (Rose McGowan) are hell-bent on resurrecting an ancient evil and conquering the world. Jason Momoa's grinning Conan is pushed from one fight scene to the next with no room for developing its lead beyond a gurning mound of meat with a chip on his shoulder.

Lacking verve and authenticity, the script fails to bring Howard's hero to life. But the Hyborian locations at least gave the team at Worldwide FX the chance to flesh out Howard's fantasy world. While the battles with CGI sand people and the leviathan stand out, subtle effects, such as painting ancient ruins into modern landscapes and the cavernous Necropolis climax, impress.

Vanishing on 7th Street

Distributor Momentum Pictures
Certificate 15
Price £8
Available 20 February 2012
RATING ✍

This low-budget horror from Brad Anderson, director of 2004's The Machinist is a monster movie lacking a monster.

The city of Detroit is plunged into darkness by a sudden and unexplained power outage, and people start disappearing, leaving behind a pile of vacated clothes. As the sunlight seeps away the shadows come to life and a group of survivors, Luke (Hayden Christensen), Paul (John Leguizamo), Rosemary (Thandie Newton) and James (Jacob Latimore) try to stay alive as they struggle to keep the lights on.

Vanishing on 7th Street is a zombie film without the shambling dead, a ghost story without the spooks. The subtle VFX bring the shadows to life and offer some tense, claustrophobic action. However, the script's many inconsistencies and loose ends fail to illuminate the whats, whys and hows of a film cornered by its own concept. ●

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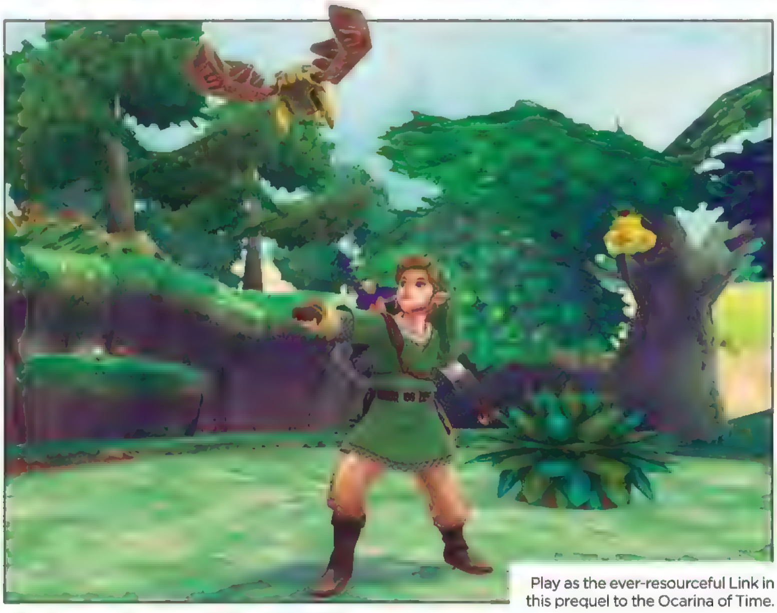


Play as the ever-resourceful Link in this prequel to the Ocarina of Time.

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

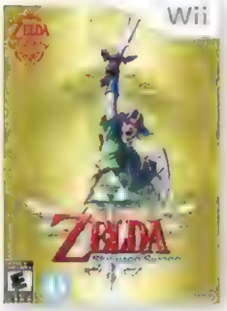
ADVENTURE CALLS The latest addition to Nintendo's venerable game series doesn't put a foot wrong

Format Wii **Publisher** Nintendo **Price** £40
Available Now **Web** www.zelda.com

Zelda games have held on tightly to the same formula since the early nineties, but not Skyward Sword. Nintendo is playing a trick on you, when your first weapon is a slingshot and your first dungeon is a Forest Temple, because from here on out everything is brand new.

There are new puzzles, new tools and an all-new orchestral soundtrack. It's a love story between Link and Zelda this time, too, with actual chemistry between the two leads and a distinct sense of peril. This is new ground for the Zelda games, and it makes Skyward Sword feel like the freshest Zelda release since Ocarina of Time. Just to drive this point home, Ocarina came out in 1998...

Yet for all their similarities, the Zelda games have never been afraid to reinvent their art styles. Satoru Takizawa has been a part of the Zelda phenomenon since Ocarina of Time, and his work on Skyward Sword is an extraordinary piece of minimalist art direction that's designed to get the most out of the Wii's ancient hardware. Takizawa's vision for Skyward Sword is brought to life by a clever shader that retains incredible detail up close and makes low-definition distant objects appear as if painted in watercolours, so no scene is muddied by an ugly texture or block of jagged geometry.



It's impossible to take a bad screenshot of Skyward Sword and it's impossible to play it without taking joy in the way the game subverts every moment you've experienced over more than two decades of Zelda. This is a bright revolution for both the Zelda series and Nintendo that manages to raise the bar for both parties.

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

Also look at...

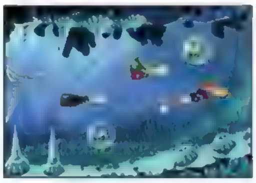
A platformer that punches above its weight, and a Middle Earth hack job

Rayman Origins

Format PS3, Vita, Wii, 3DS, Xbox 360
Publisher Ubisoft
Price £40
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍

Rayman Origins began with the creation of Ubisoft's UBIart Framework tool, which itself sprung from creative director Michel Ancel's work on Beyond Good & Evil 2. UBIart halves the time between creating the art and turning it into a playable gamespace. Artists can draw any shape, import it into UBIart, cut it up, apply a skeleton and mesh, and have it moving on screen in minutes. Rayman Origins wouldn't be possible without it. It's a 2D platformer on a truly massive scale, with four-player co-op, thousands of frames of animation, and an incomparable degree of visual density for a 2D title.

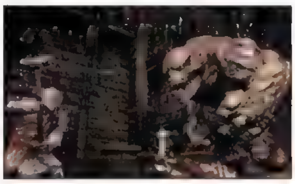
Rayman Origins is a genuine spectacle, with a lavish style in the traditions of French comic art with a depth of movement and gesture that would once have taken years to hand-animate. It's a belting 2D platformer, and at a time when 2D is so uncommon, proves to be a surprise treat for the New Year.



The Lord of the Rings War in the North

Format PS3, PC, Xbox 360
Publisher Warner Bros
Price £50
Available Now
RATING ✍✍

War in the North is a violent piece of co-op hack 'n' slash that's short on decent tactile feedback and genuine RPG depth, but long on Lord of the Rings' mythology and art. Art director and ImagineFX regular Philip Straub makes the most of the colossal amount of art based around The Lord of the Rings, drawing on designs created for the movies and art from top-flight artists such as Alan Lee and John Howe. War in the North is the first time Middle Earth's more far-flung locations have appeared on any screen and Straub's team have treated the lore with respect and cohesion.



Sadly, War in the North brings to mind EA's movie tie-ins from the PS2 era – expert art design colliding horribly with poor game design and a rough game engine. In a year with Skyrim, Dark Souls and a new Zelda, this conflict feels a little unjustified. ●

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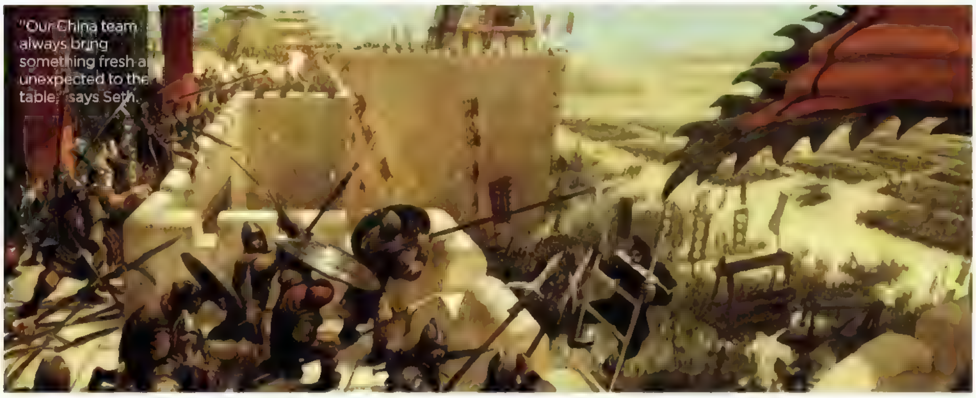
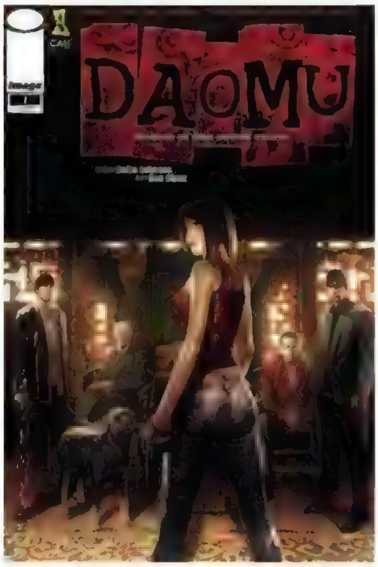


"Our China team always bring something fresh and unexpected to the table," says Seth.

In 2009 the studio published a series of graphic novels based on Daomu, a popular thriller in China.



Concept Art House

CULTURE CLASS New studio Concept Art House has reaped the rewards of having studios in San Francisco and Shanghai...

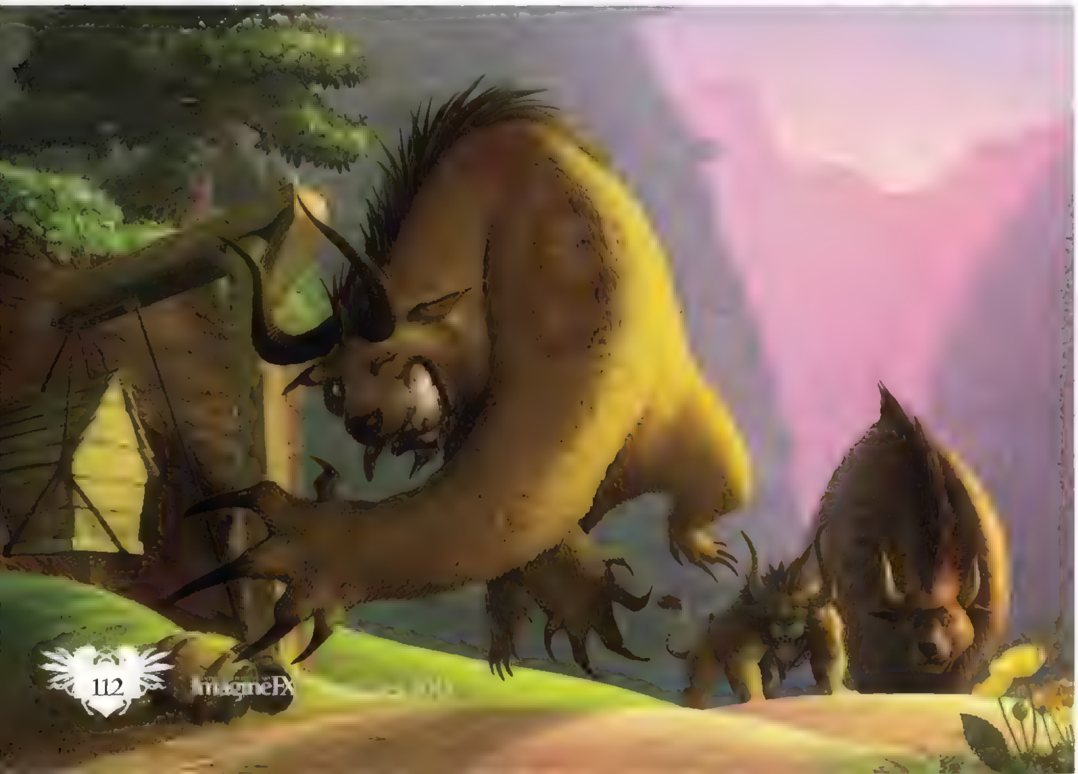
In 2007 James Zhang had a choice to make. Either continue the comfortable life of a jobbing concept artist in the video games industry, or make the hard decision to go it alone to gain creative freedom but also the trappings of book keeping, accounting and contracts. By his own admission, when he founded Concept Art House he opted for a "hybrid mix of the two".

Initially funding the studio with savings, James founded Concept Art House with Scott Chou, a handful of like-minded artists and one producer. "If I could accomplish this, I would have a place of work and a business that appealed to the entrepreneur in me and my struggle to balance passion/art with business/money," remembers James. And when investor and now chairman Matthew Le Merle joined, the gamble paid off.

Now split between San Francisco and Shanghai, Concept Art House is in the enviable position of being primed to take advantage of both the emerging Chinese development scene and a cut-throat production price war. "We offer US quality work for blended US-China pricing rates," says James. "We also have a hand-trained US quality team in China, which offers work that the large art factory in China typically cannot do."

Concept Art House has picked up contracts with the likes of EA, Blizzard and Disney, yet it's the emerging social media space that has proved crucial. The success of Facebook games such as Tap Pet Hotel, Aurora Feint and Legacy of a Thousand Suns, which was co-developed with Inside Social Games, has placed demands on the studio. "Given the state of the US economy, it's odd that I would say talent shortage is a problem, but it really is," says James. "With the growth of social/mobile gaming in recent years, most successful companies both large and small just can't hire fast enough."

But with over 100 applicants for every job Concept Art House advertises, you'll need to make sure your portfolio is perfect. "I want to see something unique... show me a window into your individual creativity. Take me



Blizzard is a big client for Concept Art House, and one that keeps coming back. "A fair number of clients come to us because we can be trusted to run the show," says Seth.

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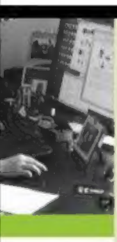


ARTIST INTERVIEW

SCOTT CHOU

Co-founder Scott on what you need to succeed as a concept artist

How should an artist approach concept work?
We're not only artists, but also service people. Getting a deep understanding of the client's need is the biggest challenge I face. I need to place myself in a client's position, like why they want a particular style, what kind of working relationship they're after. When you think this way, you'll come out with great artwork and the clients will be satisfied.

How important is it to have a studio based in China?
Diligence is a quality for our Chinese artists to focus on. Chinese are born with art talent and creativity, and they have the necessary international view. But if they want to become world-class artists, they need to focus and make the most of their chances. China is a huge potential market in the electronic entertainment field, so CAH has the chance to be one of the first companies to get into the Chinese market and reinvigorate our old art styles. That's not just a dream – we'll try to realise it.

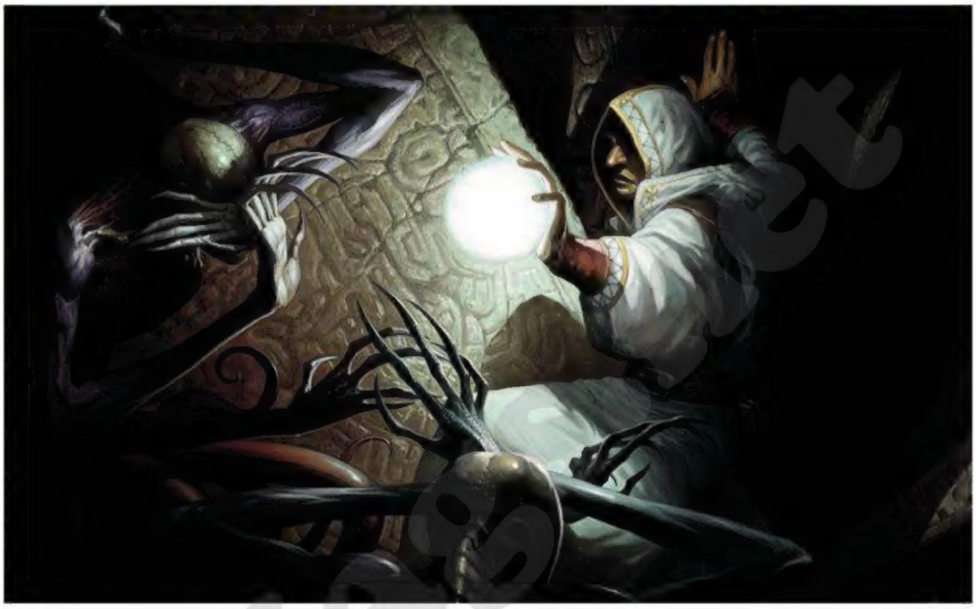
How do home-grown pitches differ to contracts?
Home-grown pitches are more complicated than the contract work. They require us to consider tech and marketing, how to open market sales and monetise our games. The team construction is also different. In the case of contract work, the team is simpler. For example, it's either art or programming. For an internal project, we need a larger variety of talent.

Do you have to be self-critical?
Artists differ from normal staff in that they feel proud of their special talent and skill, which can cause friction with the system and the management layer. So as a leader, it's necessary for me to be self-critical if I want to be trusted and supported by my colleagues.

Scott is one of China's most well-respected artists and co-founded Concept Art House and its Chinese school.

http://sandwich-5.cgsociety.org

PROJECTS TRON: Evolution, Command and Conquer 4, Star Wars Galaxies, Tap Pet Hotel



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Concept Art House has several major clients, including Wizards of the Coast. This image was created for Magic: The Gathering.

to another world," says US art director Seth Henderson, adding: "Far too often, pieces are over-rendered and say very little. Instead, be loose and give it some life. Tell me a story with the strokes you choose to include."

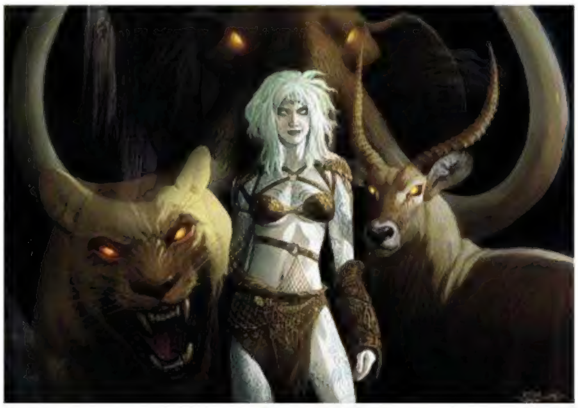
❝As long as you're confident and creatively aware, then Concept Art House can make your dreams come true❞

Two artists who've recently passed the test are Johnny Qi Zhang and Kai 'The Cage' Jing, and now that they're working at Concept Art House have no intention of letting up. "The biggest challenge is to make our products better than others," says Kai, while Johnny sees the challenges as more personal: "If you're obsessed with anime/manga, superhero comics or photo-realism, then you need to become more well-rounded. Tunnel-vision is creatively crippling and it breeds imitation and homogenised artists who can't think outside the established box."

Even Seth follows these rules. His US team runs projects in 3D, vector and 2D, which forces Seth to constantly learn and challenge himself. "Honestly, if I wasn't learning something new every day, I'd find another profession," says Seth. "A good artist has to be open to change and always critical of their own work."

Such a melting pot of projects, skills and cultures enables Concept Art House's artists to produce in-demand results. "You'll be trained like a Spartan," says Kai who reveals he learns new production skills every day, making the studio a perfect place to grow as an artist. To which Johnny adds: "As long as you're confident in yourself and have creative awareness, then Concept Art House is a place where you can make your dreams come true." ●

"The aim is to please the client as fast as possible," says Seth about Concept Art House's approach to concept work.



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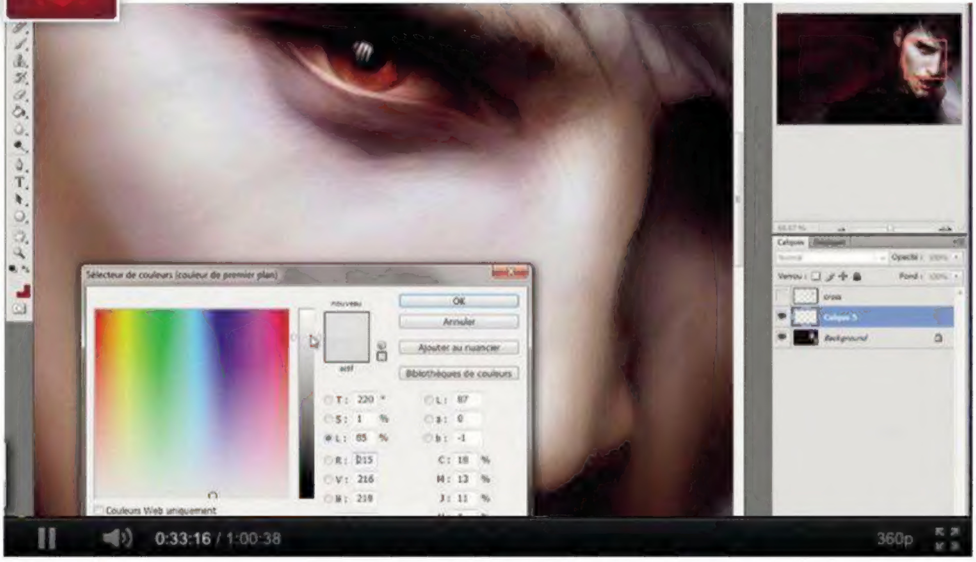
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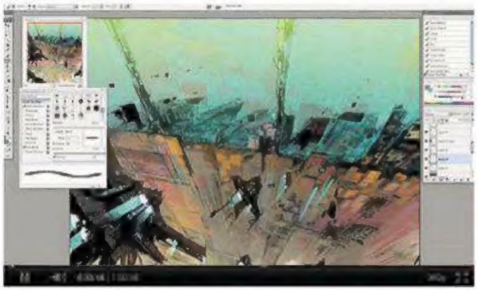
Paint a vampire in Photoshop

French artist Mélanie Delon shares her process of creating a hauntingly beautiful male creature of the night. Watch the video at **www.bit.ly/mdelon**.



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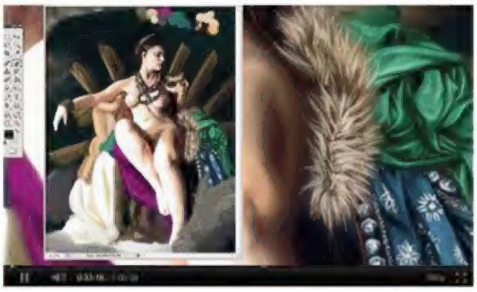
See how Mike McCain creates a dramatic sci-fi landscape at **www.bit.ly/mikemccain**.



Realistic females

Marta Dahlig explains how she paints a real fantasy woman at **www.bit.ly/mdahlig**.

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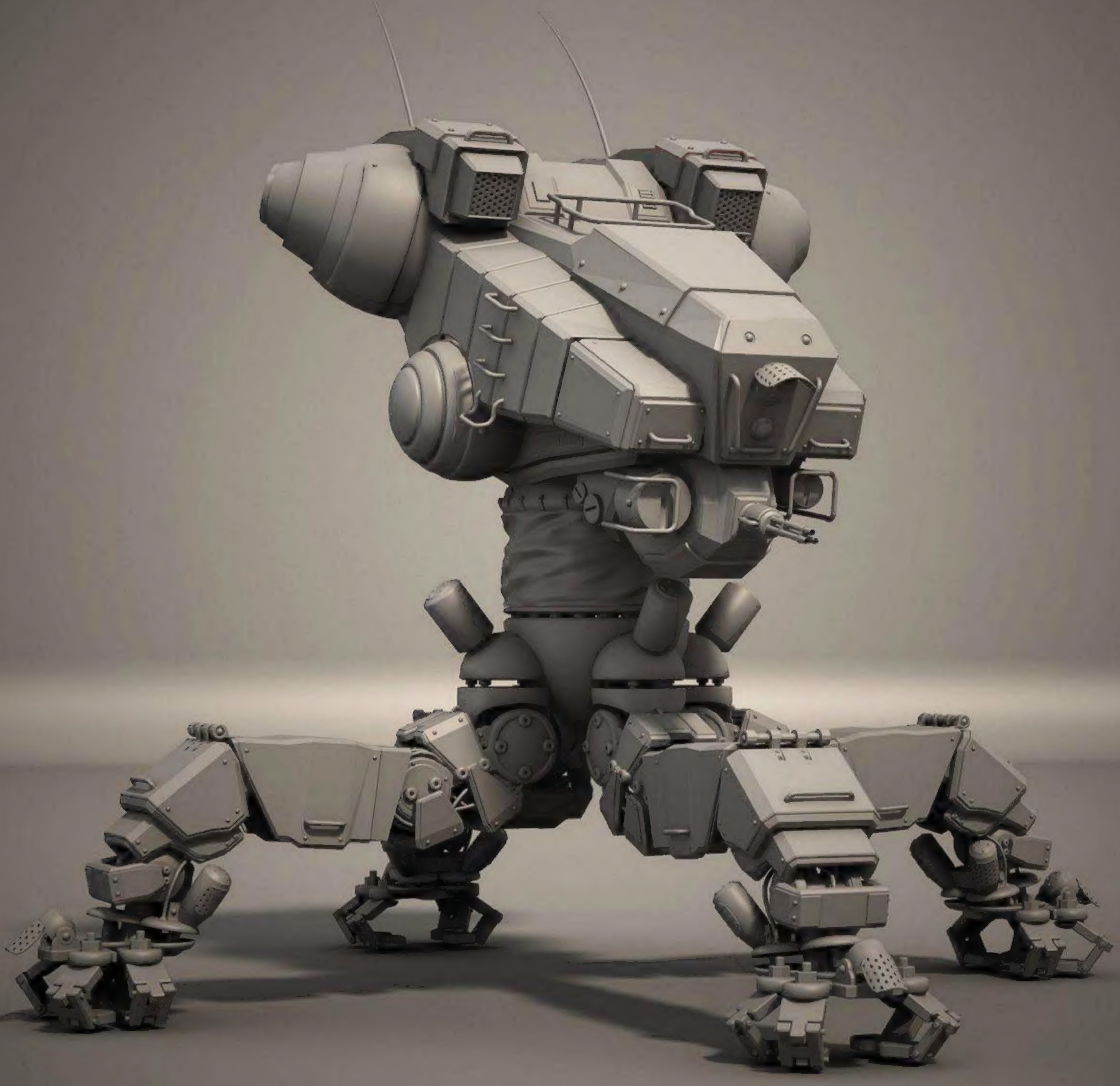
HOW MUCH DID YOU LEARN LAST WEEK?



FERNANDO DEGYVES

PRIOR TRAINING: NONE
TIME IN SCHOOL: 2 WEEKS
MODELING TIME: 4 DAYS

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Robot design by Michael Herm